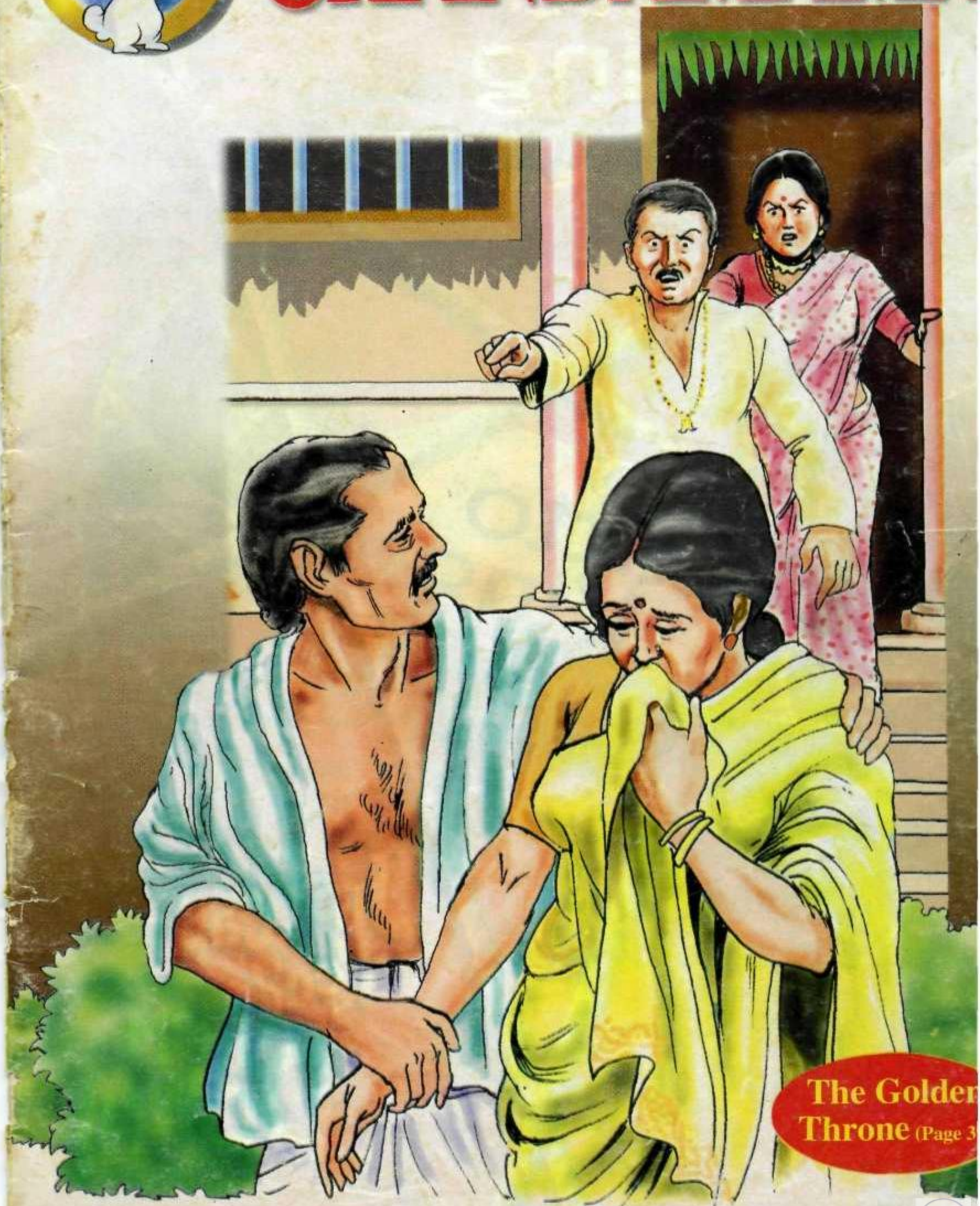




CHANDAMAMA



The Golden Throne (Page 3)



Lacto King

WITH JUMPY VITAMINS



Just Can't
Keep Them
DOWN!

CHANDAMAMA

Vol. 30

August 2000

No. 8

CONTENTS

FICTION

THE LIBERATION OF PARAMDHAMA (New Tales of King Vikram and the Vetala)	13
FOOD FOR THOUGHT	19
THE DIRT IN ONE'S MIND	22
THE ANGRY DRAGON (A tale from China)	23
BUNTU AND THE TIGER (Adventures of Buntu)	27
THE ENSLAVED DEMON	29
A FRIEND IN NEED IS A FRIEND INDEED	32
TIT FOR TAT	38
THE GOLDEN THRONE - 8	39
SAMARITAN SAMIR - 2 (Comics)	47
A TALE WITH A TAIL	58

GLIMPSES FROM THE PAST

SAGA OF INDIA - 8	34
-------------------	----

MYTHOLOGY

STORY OF VISHNU - 3	51
---------------------	----

FEATURES

BORN THIS MONTH— SRI AUROBINDO	6
NEWSFLASH	7
MANY HORIZONS - RUSKIN BOND :	
THE MAN WHO LOVED TREES	10
UNSOLVED MYSTERIES —	
THE SUBMERGED CIVILIZATION	61
TOWARDS BETTER ENGLISH	64
LET US KNOW	65

CONTESTS

DISCOVERY OF INDIA - QUIZ	33
CREATIVE CONTEST	46
PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST	66

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HIGHLIGHTS



The Saga of India

The Golden Throne



Unsolved Mysteries



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FAR AWAY



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Founded by

B. Nagi Reddi and Chakrapani

A DAY FOR LOOKING WITHIN

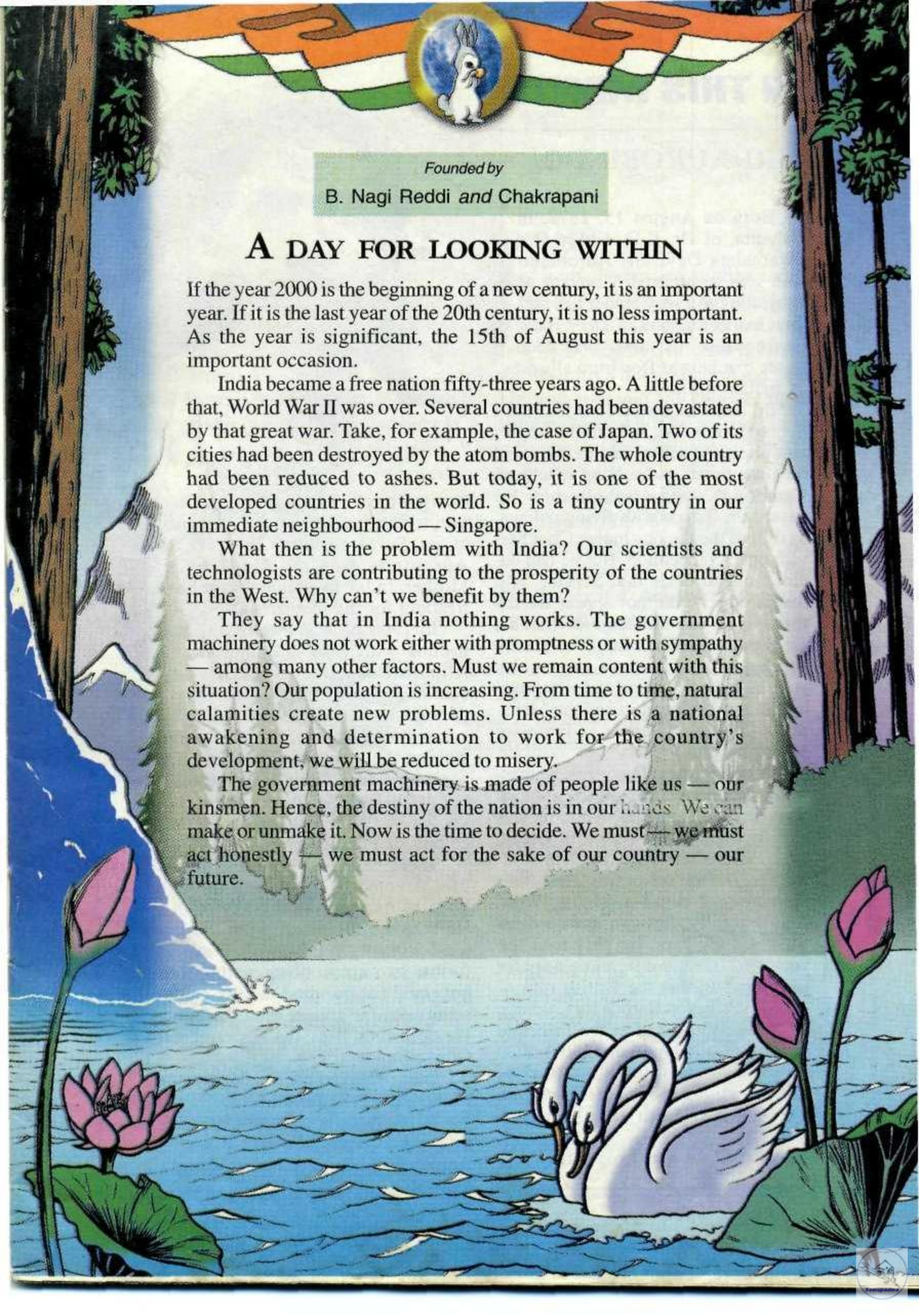
If the year 2000 is the beginning of a new century, it is an important year. If it is the last year of the 20th century, it is no less important. As the year is significant, the 15th of August this year is an important occasion.

India became a free nation fifty-three years ago. A little before that, World War II was over. Several countries had been devastated by that great war. Take, for example, the case of Japan. Two of its cities had been destroyed by the atom bombs. The whole country had been reduced to ashes. But today, it is one of the most developed countries in the world. So is a tiny country in our immediate neighbourhood — Singapore.

What then is the problem with India? Our scientists and technologists are contributing to the prosperity of the countries in the West. Why can't we benefit by them?

They say that in India nothing works. The government machinery does not work either with promptness or with sympathy — among many other factors. Must we remain content with this situation? Our population is increasing. From time to time, natural calamities create new problems. Unless there is a national awakening and determination to work for the country's development, we will be reduced to misery.

The government machinery is made of people like us — our kinsmen. Hence, the destiny of the nation is in our hands. We can make or unmake it. Now is the time to decide. We must — we must act honestly — we must act for the sake of our country — our future.



BORN THIS MONTH

SRI AUROBINDO

Born on August 15, 1872, in Calcutta, of Dr. K.D. Ghose and Swarnalata Devi, Sri Aurobindo was sent to an Irish Convent at Darjeeling at a very tender age and then led to England in 1879. This was because his father was keen to see that he was free from all sorts of Indian influence.

Sri Aurobindo studied at St. Paul's School in London, won all the important prizes the school had to offer, and then went over to the King's College, Cambridge, with a scholarship. He passed the Tripos with flying colours, as well as the famous Indian Civil Service open competition. But he had decided not to enter that Service, and that is why he did not appear for the riding test. The Maharaja of Baroda, Sir Sayaji Rao Gaekwad, who was in London, offered him a position in his government. Sri Aurobindo returned to India in 1893 and joined the Maharaja's College at Baroda as Professor of English and French.

During the next few years, he mastered Sanskrit along with several other Indian languages, while he was already highly well-versed in Greek, Latin, and other languages. He studied the Indian scriptures and other literature and began practising Yoga. Also, secretly, through some of his trusted followers, he prepared the youths of India at different places for a struggle against the British rule.

In 1906 he left Baroda for Calcutta. For a while he acted as the Principal of the first national college founded by some patriots, but soon became busy in editing the *Bande Mataram*, a newspaper with revolutionary views.

In 1907 he and Lokamanya Bal



Gangadhar Tilak gave a radical turn to the Indian National Congress at its Surat session. In fact, Sri Aurobindo was the first son of Mother India to demand complete freedom for the motherland.

In 1908 he was arrested in connection with what is famous as the Alipore Conspiracy Case. He was confined in a solitary cell for a year, during which he had unique and great spiritual experiences. He was acquitted, but the rulers tried to arrest him again and deport him to some other country. But Sri Aurobindo, unknown to them, left for the French colony of Pondicherry.

There began a new phase of his life, devoted to Yoga, and through Yoga to find out the mystery of life. He realized that man is not the last word in evolution. Man shall evolve further into a new being who will be governed not by mind, but by a consciousness far greater than the mind. He describes it as the Supramental Consciousness.

India achieved her freedom on the birthday of Sri Aurobindo.

Today there is an ever-increasing interest all over the world in Sri Aurobindo's vision of human destiny.



Newsflash

AGE IS NO BAR

Children these days do not generally shy away from classes and studies, though some of them might want to play truant occasionally. The story of Raj Kishore Pandey of New Delhi will certainly prove an inspiration to such children. This 44-year-old security guard at Delhi University recently submitted his thesis for a Ph.D. degree. He came to Delhi in 1980 from U.P. armed with a XII Standard certificate from his village school and started as a worker at the university on a daily wage basis. He could not join any college, but managed to appear privately for his B.A. and then M.A. degrees. Meanwhile he married and had four

children. When he applied for admission to Ph.D., he was advised to take leave without pay for at least two years. How could he, when he had a large family to support? The university helped him, by giving him only night duty. He spent many a sleepless night to prepare his thesis on *A comparative study of Adhyatma Ramayana and Ananda Ramayana*. According to him there are nearly a hundred different versions of the *Ramayana*.

Now here's a slightly different story : Maria Luisa Pietrarroia of Central Italy will attend pre-school from September. When she was born 105 years ago, it appears, there was no such thing as pre-school and she never went to any school later in life.



LESS STRAIN AND STRESS

Children carrying heavy school bags on their back is a common sight in India — even in Singapore, where a team of mechanical engineering and business studies experts have, for six months now, been examining the popular makes of school bags and re-designing them to reduce stress and strain. This study followed frequent complaints from children of severe back and shoulder pain. During their investigation, the experts found that children are carrying in their bags not only books, but big pencil cases, toys, and water-bottles - all adding to the weight.

The team has now come up with a design which has a padded, foam-covered harness. There is also a compression spring which acts as a shock absorber. We can hope that such bags will make their appearance in India at least from the next academic year.



BAN ON BEEDI

Beedi, as many of you may know, is something like a cigarette, manufactured widely in India — especially in the south. As it is, price-wise, cheap, it is very popular with the labour class and those smokers who prefer something less strong! Of late, beedi has been an export item earning foreign exchange for India. The exporters recently suffered a setback when the U.S.A. banned the import of beedis. The authorities said there is widespread child labour involved in the manufacture of beedis. In fact, the U.S. Government has taken a far-reaching decision that it will not import any product manufactured by child labourers. It is really a pity that in India, children are still employed in the manufacture of crackers, bangles, and carpets — to mention only a few products. They can also be seen in hotels as servers and dishwashers, and in market areas as porters.



PANCHATANTRA AT THE CLICK OF THE MOUSE

There are 'mousey' stories in the *Panchatantra*, but the mouse in the heading above refers to the internet which will soon have the entire *Panchatantra* and *Kathasaritsagara* stories, which one can see and read on one's computer terminal at the click of a mouse. The Department of Science of Pune University is almost ready with the required software, which will also include proverbs from Sanskrit literature, and words of wisdom or *Subhashita* from ancient Sanskrit texts, among other features. The project called 'Sanskrit Informatics' is being readied by experts from the IITs at Kanpur and Hyderabad, and C-DAC, Bangalore.

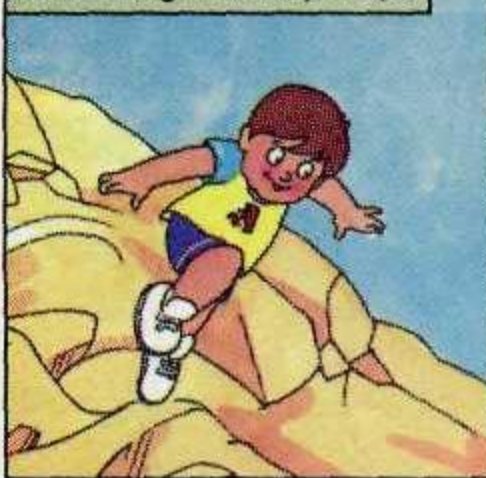


THE AMUL CHEESE BOY



IN PICNIC PANIC

One bright sunny day...



...a picnic is in progress.



Little Munnu Verma crawls away.



Suddenly, huge rocks come tumbling down the mountain.



Amul cheese boy eats a Amul cheese slice...



...and becomes strong and powerful.



He smashes the falling rocks...



All thanks to the cheese that has more milk in it.

...reducing them to small pieces



Munnu is rescued and back with his family.



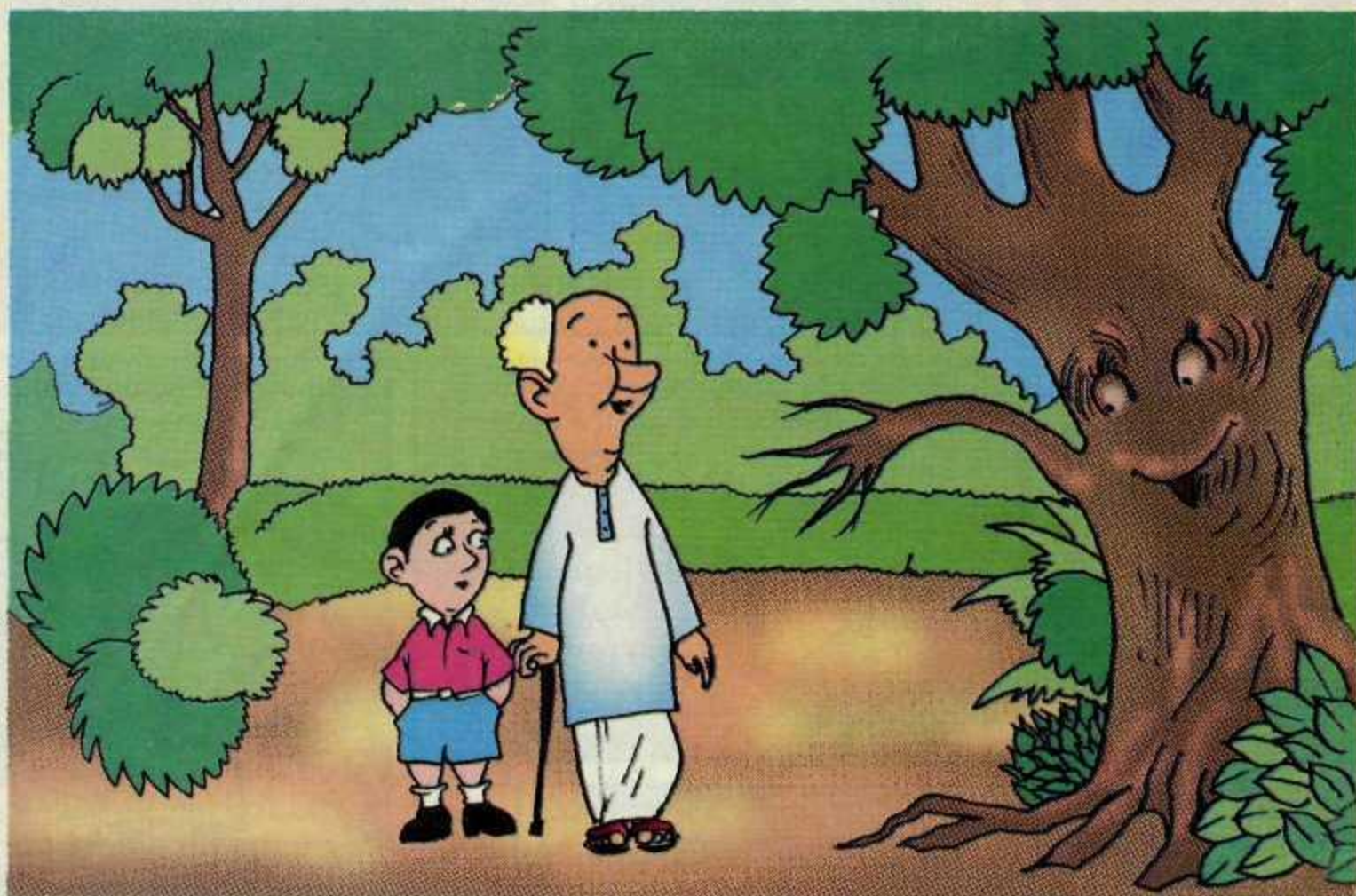
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THE MAN WHO LOVED TREES

One morning while I was sitting beside grandfather on the verandah steps, I noticed a tendril of a creeping vine trailing nearby. As we sat there in the soft sunshine of a north Indian winter, I saw the tendril moving slowly towards grandfather. Twenty minutes later it had crossed the step and was touching his feet.

There is probably a scientific explanation for the plant's behaviour — something to do with light and warmth, perhaps — but I liked to think it moved across the steps simply because it wanted to be near grandfather. One always felt like drawing close to him. Sometimes when I sat by myself beneath

a tree, I would feel rather lonely but as soon as grandfather joined me, the garden became a happy place. Grandfather had served many years in the Indian Forest Service and it was natural that he should know and like trees. On his retirement, he built a bungalow on the outskirts of the town of Dehra Dun, planting trees all around. Like mango, orange, and guava, also eucalyptus, jacaranda, and Persian lilacs. In the fertile Doon Valley, plants and trees grew tall and strong.

There were other trees in the compound before the house was built, including an old peepul that had forced its



way through the wall of an abandoned outhouse, knocking the bricks down with its vigorous growth. Peepul trees are great show offs. Even when there is no breeze, their broad-chested, slim-waisted leaves will spin like tops determined to attract your attention and invite you into the shade. Grandmother had wanted the peepul tree cut down, but grandfather had said: "Let it be, we can always build another outhouse."

Grandmother did not mind trees but she preferred growing flowers and was constantly ordering seeds and catalogues. Grandfather helped her out with the gardening, not because he was crazy about flower gardens but because he liked watching butterflies and "there's only one way to attract butterflies," he said, "and that is to grow flowers for them."

Grandfather was not content with growing trees in our compound. During the rains, he would walk into the jungle beyond the river bed, armed with cuttings and saplings which he would plant in the forest.

"But no one ever comes here!" I protested, the first time we did this. "Who is going to see them?"

"We're not planting them simply to

improve the view," replied grandfather. "We're planting them for the forest and for the birds and animals who live here and need more food and shelter."

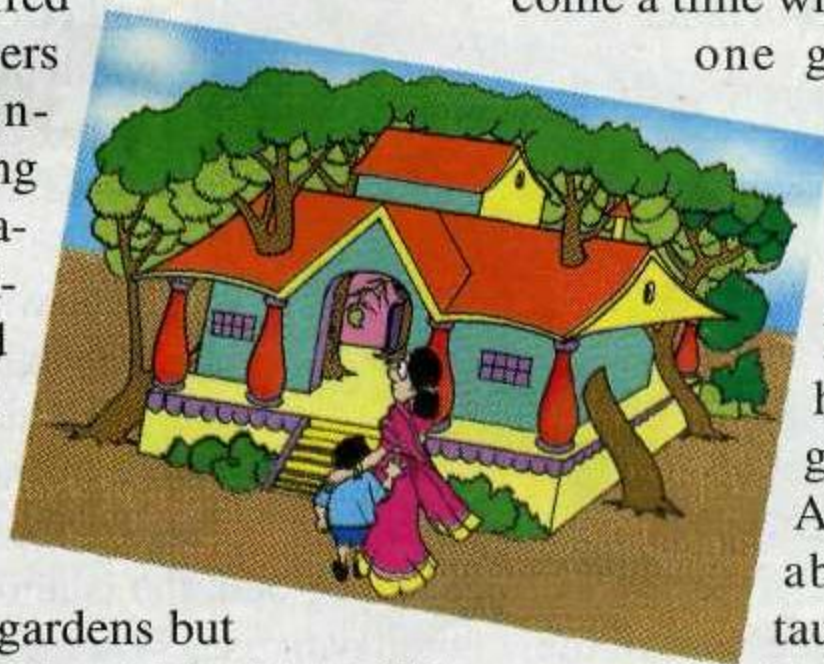
"Of course, men need trees too," he added. "To keep the desert away, to attract rain, to prevent the banks of rivers from being washed away, for fruit and flowers, leaf and seed. Yes, for timber too. But men are cutting down trees without replacing them and if we don't plant a few ourselves, there will come a time when the world will be

one great desert." The

thought of a world without trees became a sort of nightmare to me and I helped grandfather in his tree-planting with greater enthusiasm. And while we went about our work, he taught me a poem by George Morris:

*Woodman, spare that tree!
Touch not a single bough!
In youth it sheltered me,
And I'll protect it now.*

"One day the trees will move again," said grandfather. "They've been standing for thousands of years but there was a time when they could walk about like people. Then along came an interfering busybody who cast a spell over them, rooting them to one place. But they're always trying to move. See how they reach out with their arms! And some of



them, like the banyan tree with its travelling aerial roots, manage to get quite far.”

We found an island, a small rocky island in a dry river bed. It was one of those river beds so common in the foothills which are completely dry in summer but flooded during the monsoon rains. A small mango tree was growing on the island. “If a small mango tree can grow here,” said grandfather, “so can others.” As soon as the rains set in and while the river could still be crossed, we set out with a number of tamarind, laburnum and coral tree saplings and cuttings and spent the day planting them on the island.

The monsoon season was the time for rambling about. At every turn there was something new to see. Out of the earth and rock and leafless boughs the magic touch of the rains had brought life and greenness. You could see the broad-leaved vines growing. Plants sprang up in the most unlikely of places. A peepul would take root in the ceiling, a mango would sprout on the window sill. We did not like to remove them, but they had to go if the house was to be saved from falling down.

“If you want to live in a tree, that’s all right by me,” said grandmother crossly. “But I like having a roof over my head and I’m not going to have my

roof brought down by the jungle.”

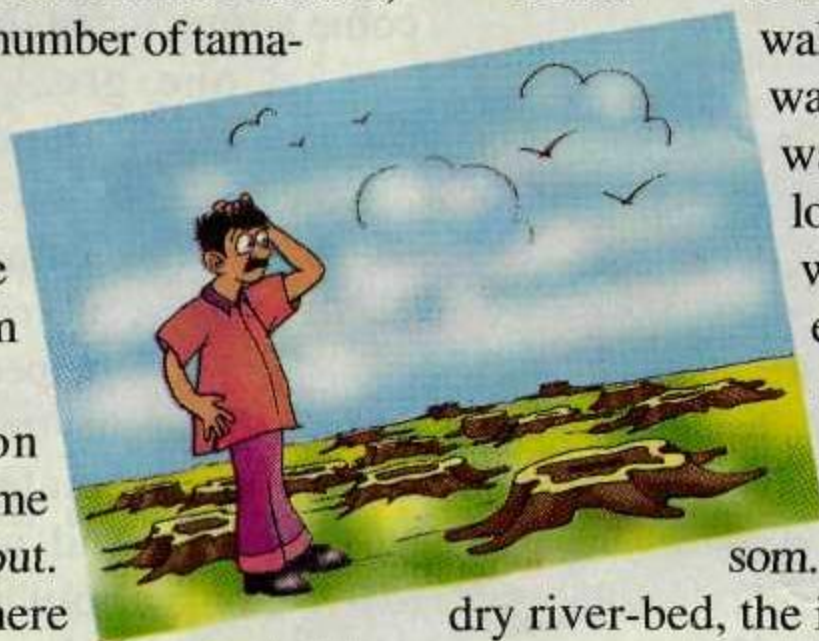
Then the Second World War came and I was sent away to a boarding school, and during the holidays, I went to live with my father in Delhi. Meanwhile, my grandparents sold the house and went away to England. Two or three years later, I too went to England and I was away from India for several years.

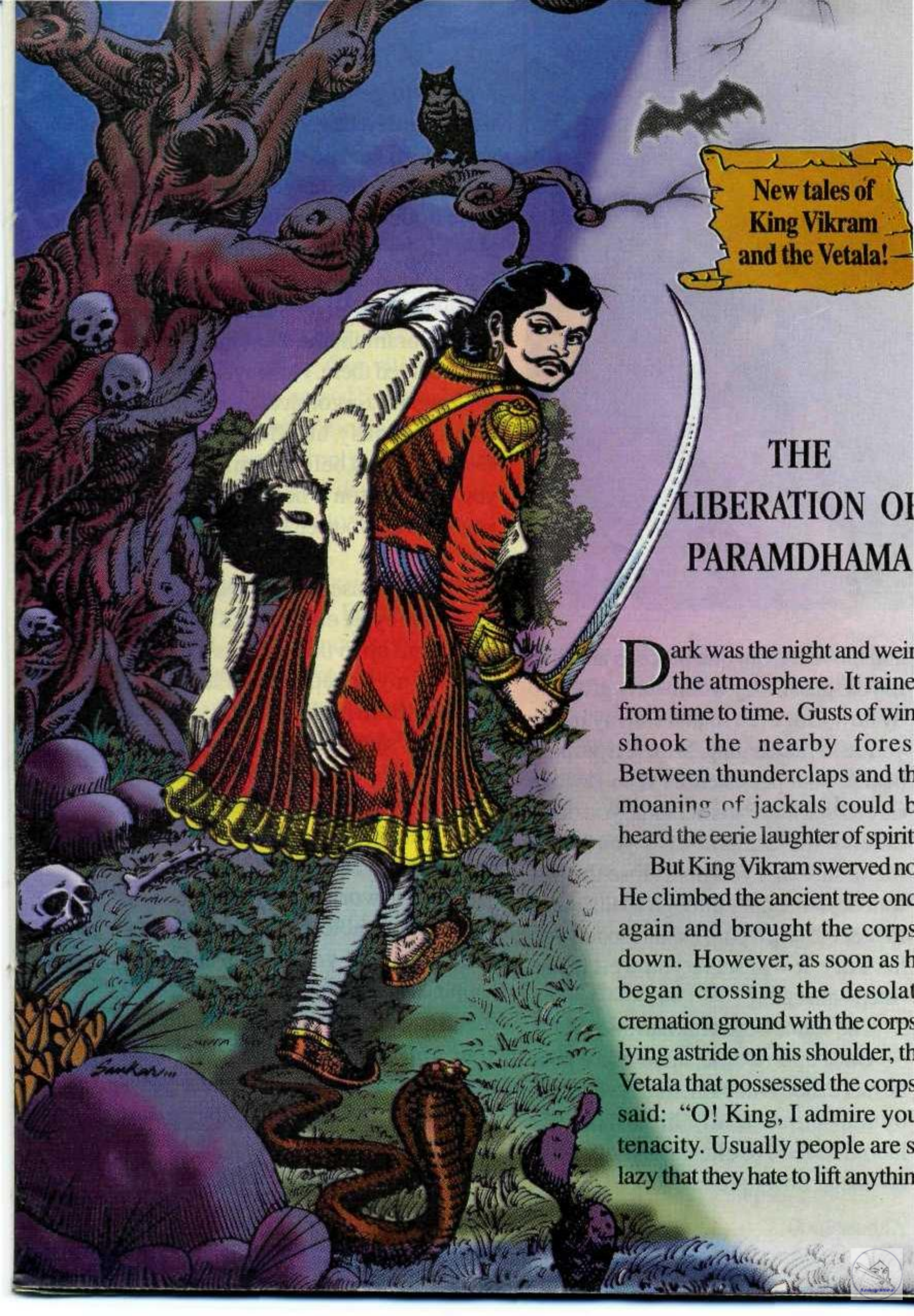
Some years later I visited Dehra Dun again. After first visiting the old house — it had

not changed much — I walked out of town towards the river bed. It was February. As I looked across the dry water-course, my eye was immediately caught by the spectacular red blooms of the coral blossom. In contrast with the

dry river-bed, the island was a small green paradise. When I went up to the trees, I noticed that some squirrels were living in them, and a *koel*, a crow pheasant, challenged me with a mellow “who-are-you, who-are-you”.

But the trees seemed to know me, they whispered among themselves and beckoned me nearer. And looking around I noticed that other smaller trees, wild plants, and grass had sprung up under their protection. Yes, the trees we had planted long ago had multiplied. They were walking again. In one small corner of the world, grandfather’s dream had come true.





New tales of
King Vikram
and the Vetala!

THE LIBERATION OF PARAMDHAMA

Dark was the night and weird the atmosphere. It rained from time to time. Gusts of wind shook the nearby forests. Between thunderclaps and the moaning of jackals could be heard the eerie laughter of spirits.

But King Vikram swerved not. He climbed the ancient tree once again and brought the corpse down. However, as soon as he began crossing the desolate cremation ground with the corpse lying astride on his shoulder, the Vetala that possessed the corpse said: "O! King, I admire your tenacity. Usually people are so lazy that they hate to lift anything



and move it from one place to another. In your place, they would have given up by now. But even in this stormy night, you're so unrelenting. Is there a purpose behind your persistence? If so, do take care so that like Paramdhama, you don't falter at the end and miss your goal. Make sure that you don't lose the just fruit of your labour through foolishness. In order to warn you, I'd like to tell you his story. It will serve you well if you listen with care."

The vetala began his narration:

Once upon a time, there was a poor farmer called Paramdhama. He lived all by himself on a tiny little farm. He laboured hard to eke out a living. But no matter how hard he worked, he just

seemed to get poorer and poorer. Finally, one day, he got fed up with his life and set off for the deep, dark jungle. He thought, the dangers of the jungle were nothing compared to the miserable life he was leading. He decided to pray to God and seek liberation from this world and all its woes.

So Paramdhama went into the forest and lived there. He prayed hard and for long. He forgot sleep, food, and all comfort. Finally, his effort paid off and God appeared before him. "What do you wish for, son?" he asked. "Why are you torturing yourself like this in the forest?"

"Lord, please liberate me from this miserable cycle of death and birth. Being bound up in this cycle is the main cause of my unhappiness. Please take me away from it all!"

"Son," said God gently, "you're born in this world as a human, so that you can seek your own salvation by helping other beings. You haven't done either as yet, and so cannot be liberated now. You've to work for your freedom. When you're able to help others, without thinking of your own troubles or happiness, you would have earned your freedom. However, as a reward for your *tapasya*, I shall bless you with some special powers. Use these powers wisely and well, and you'll soon earn your liberation."

Paramdhama was disappointed. He



was weary of this world and wanted to give it all up as soon as possible. As he walked slowly out of the jungle, he came across a strange sight. A young man was walking on his hands. "Why are you walking like this?" Paramdhama asked him curiously.

"My father has a strange disease," the young man replied. "No medicine has had any effect. Our village priest feels that he's possessed by an evil spirit. The spirit would be pacified and my father would get well only if I walked like this for a while every day."

"Isn't it difficult to walk like this?" asked Paramdhama.

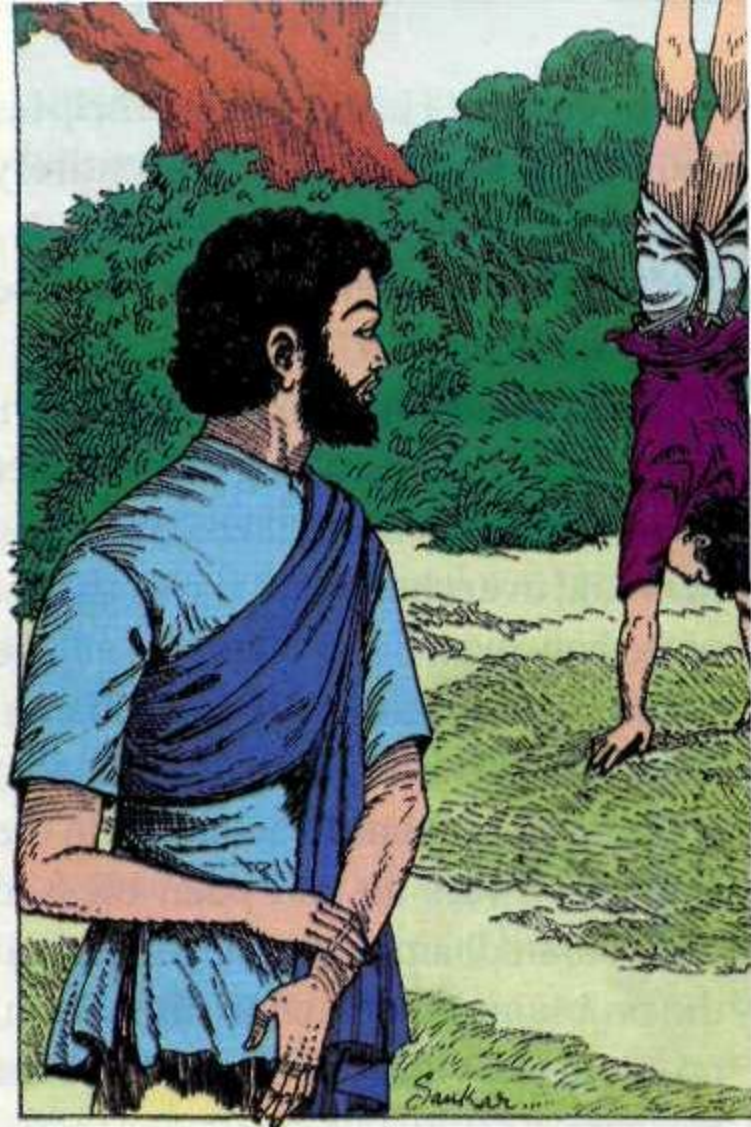
"Of course it is," said the youth. "I also have a weak arm. But I feel, a withered arm will be a small price to pay if my father were to get well."

Paramdhama was impressed by the young man's unselfishness. "You're indeed a noble soul," he said. "Your goodness will ensure that your father gets completely cured. Now go home. You'll find that all is well. My words won't prove wrong."

The youth got on to his feet and said: "You must come with me and grace our home with your presence."

"I'm not expecting any thanks or reward for my words or deeds," said Paramdhama a little harshly.

"Swami," said the youth, "what reward can we humble folk give a great person like you? I invited you home so



that not only my father but all the other ailing people in our village could meet you and be blessed."

"Maybe I could help others in the village," Paramdhama thought to himself. "Wait a little," he said aloud. Then closing his eyes, he meditated on God and pleaded: "Lord, I've unselfishly used the powers you gave me to help another. Please liberate me now."

"There are many who help others more unselfishly than you, and yet they haven't been liberated. Even this boy is more altruistic and worthy. You've much more work to do. Go with him!" God spoke from inside his heart.

"How can you say that?" protested

Paramdhama. "He was trying to help his father, but I helped someone entirely unknown."

"When you understand this, you'll be ready for liberation," said God.

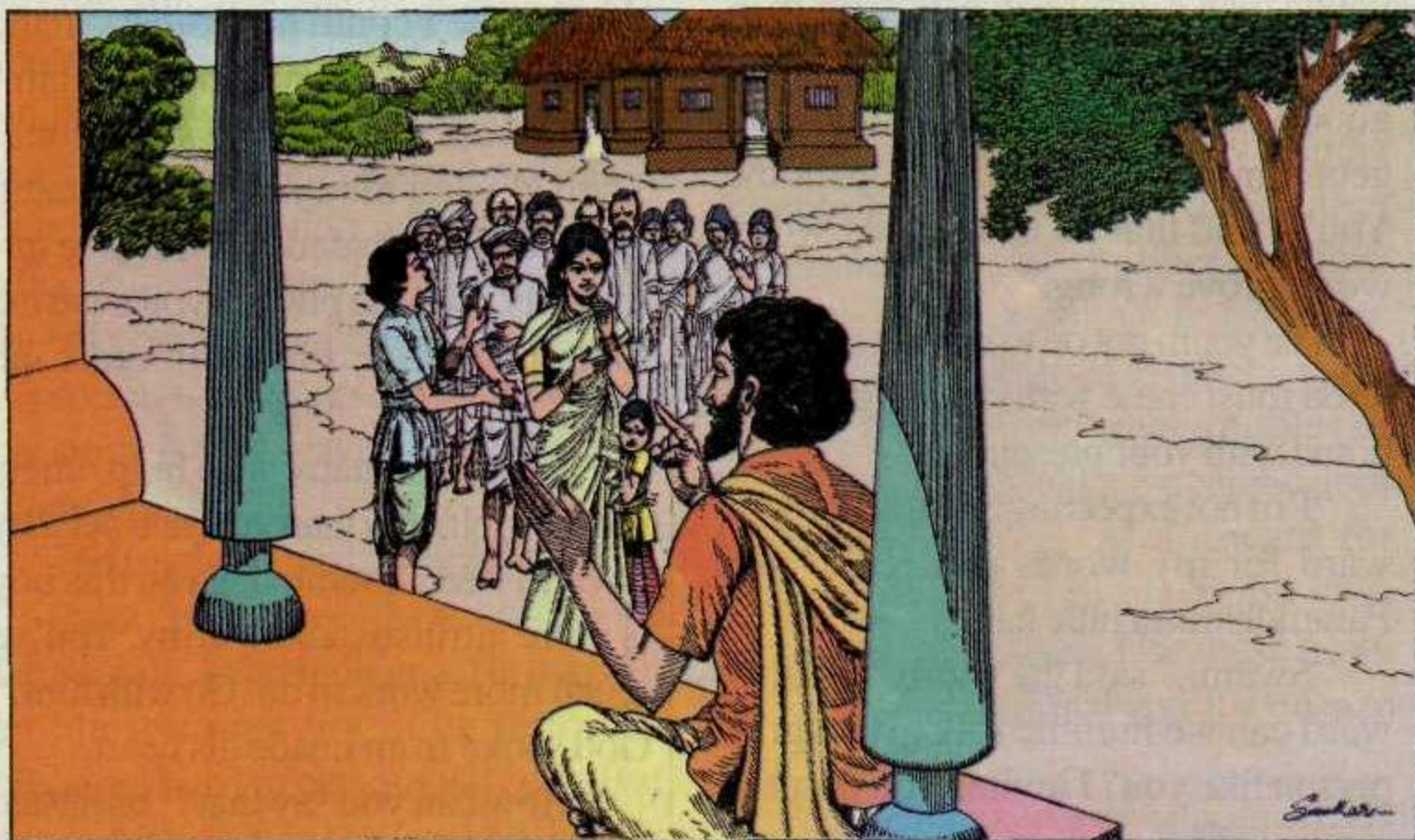
So Paramdhama went with the youth. They found that the young man's father had miraculously been cured. The young man told everybody that it was the act of the holy man. Everyone in the village now crowded around Paramdhama. They wanted him to bless them so that all their woes would vanish. With the special powers he had been blessed with, Paramdhama was able to solve all the problems presented to him. Soon, no one in that village had any worries or anxieties.

A man called Ranga of that village was a rogue. He was a bully and used to help many of the rich and powerful

people of the village to oppress the poor. With life in the village flowing so smoothly, with no quarrels or problems, Ranga did not have anything much to do. He also saw that things had changed around him and found himself strangely reluctant to continue with his old ways. He was filled with remorse for what he had done in the past.

One day, he went to Paramdhama. "Swami, I'm a very wicked person. I've caused a lot of pain and grief to a lot of people. I can't overcome my past. I think my salvation lies only in liberation from this life. I crave for *moksha*. Could you please grant me liberation?"

Paramdhama did not know what to say. Not having achieved *moksha* himself, he felt he could not grant it to Ranga. He tried to distract him from this path. He said: "Ask anything else of me—



wealth, jewels, a house. I can give you any of that, but I'm afraid I can't grant *moksha*."

But Ranga was adamant. "No, Swami, I don't want anything else. No amount of comfort or happiness in the future will wipe away the sins of my past life. The only way to free myself from this terrible life is to attain *moksha*. And only a great person like you can grant it to me." Ranga held on to Paramdhama's feet.

Paramdhama said: "All right, let me think about it. Come back tomorrow."

After Ranga left, Paramdhama once again meditated on God. "If you want Ranga to achieve liberation or the freedom of *moksha*, you'll have to give up your own chances," warned God from deep within his heart.

Paramdhama made up his mind. The

next day, when Ranga stood in front of him anxiously, Paramdhama said: "I'm going to transfer all my *punya*—all the good I have collected in my life—to you. Go to the river bank and meditate on God sincerely. If you do that, you'll attain liberation."

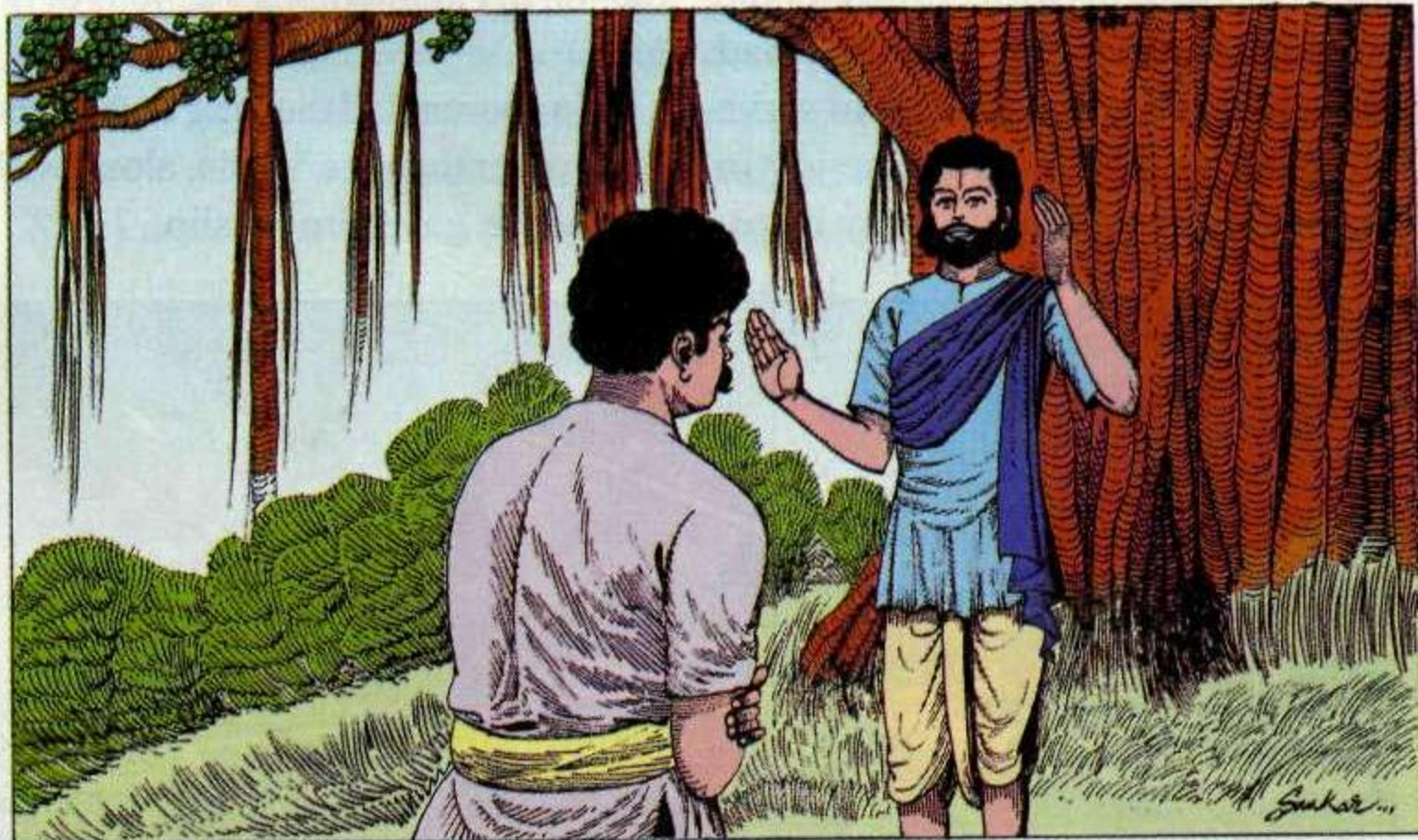
Ranga followed Paramdhama's instructions faithfully and was freed from this life and rebirths.

God then appeared before Paramdhama and said: "Paramdhama, you've earned your *moksha* and I've come to grant you liberation."

"I don't want it," said Paramdhama.

"Your time on earth is over. You've done your duty. Bathe in the pure waters of the river and think of me. You'll attain *moksha*."

The Vetala finished his story there and addressed King Vikram: "O! King,



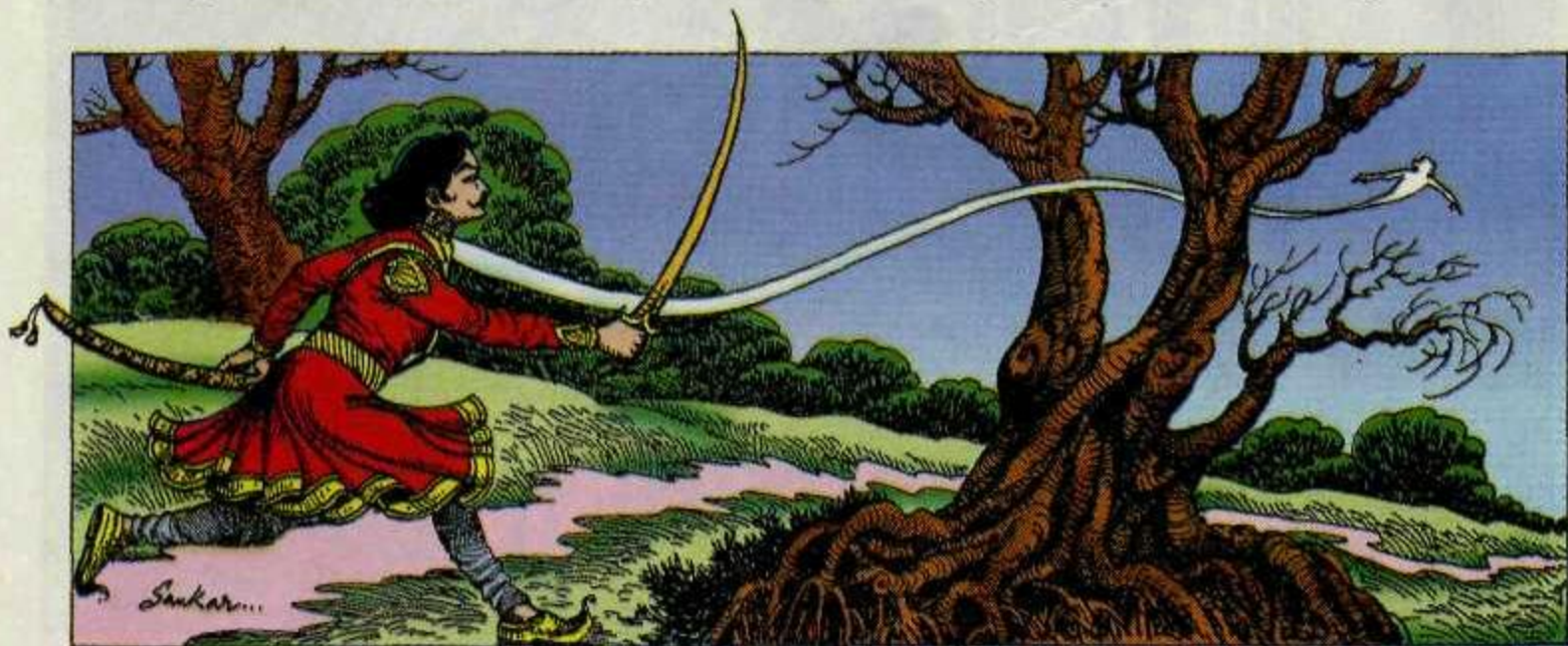
Paramdhama had begged and pleaded for *moksha* many times, but God always refused to grant it to him. Yet Paramdhama refused to accept it when he was offered liberation. Was Paramdhama ignorant of the good fortune that had come his way and refused *moksha* when it was granted to him? On the other hand, he himself granted *moksha* so easily to a rogue like Ranga who did not deserve it at all. Didn't Paramdhama understand the value of this liberation which many great souls pine for? Answer me O! King. If you keep the answers to yourself, your head will explode into tiny pieces!"

King Vikram promptly spoke up: "Paramdhama's refusal of *moksha* shows his nobility, not his ignorance. He was completely unselfish and willing to sacrifice his own desires for the sake of another person. God had granted him special powers to serve mankind, and he got genuine joy in serving others. That was why he re-

fused liberation. Before he realised this, he felt life was a burden and sought liberation as a way of running away from his problems. If he had been granted liberation, then his character, mind, and soul would not have had a chance to blossom and develop.

"As far as Ranga is concerned, he felt true remorse and desperately wanted to atone for his past. If Paramdhama had not helped him get liberation, he might have gone back to his old ways out of frustration. Besides, true remorse deserves to be rewarded. When Paramdhama had used his powers to help people in an unselfish manner, he fulfilled the reason for which he was put on earth. His soul then became pure. He was liberated when he was ready for it. Therefore, there was no contradiction in Paramdhama's actions or his life."

No sooner had the king concluded his answer than the Vetala, along with the corpse, gave him the slip.





FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Shivkaran was a small trader of a small village. He lived in the village, but traded in the town, where he knew he could make more money. He had to go to the town every day. It was quite a distance and he had to set off early in the morning and would return only late in the night. It was tiring, and living in the town would have made it easier for him, but living in the village was much cheaper.

Shivkaran knew how to trade and he made a lot of money. Though he loved to make money, he hated to spend it. "Simple food is better for us," he would tell his wife Radha. "We should learn to manage with very little money. Thriftiness is the way to wealth."

He would not allow Radha to cook any delicacies. "*Dal* and *roti* will do for today," he would say. "Why do you want Halva or Jalebi? That is not for the likes

of us." And he would persuade her not to waste money on fine food or clothes.

Radha was a docile woman and did not like to do things her husband obviously did not like. She did not care too much about her clothes, but she did miss good food. Her mother was an expert cook and loved good food. She had passed on her passion to her daughter and had taught her to make all kinds of delicacies. Radha longed to cook and eat well.

One day, she thought to herself: "Why don't I cook something nice in the day when my husband is away? He won't know, and what he doesn't know won't hurt him! I can have good things for lunch and make him his *dal* and *roti* for the night. That way both of us will be happy". And she did just that.

This went on for some time.



Shivkaran had no idea that money was being spent on all kinds of dishes. In fact, he did not even know Radha could cook so well. She had never told him. Radha found that the arrangement suited her very well and there the matter remained.

One day, as Shivkaran made his way home late at night as usual, a neighbour met him. He said: "Today my wife has made some sweets for the *pooja* we had at home. Please accept some

"Brother, what're you saying?" asked the neighbour. "Doesn't the most delicious smell waft into our house from your kitchen every day? In fact, when the aroma of cooking from your house sets my mouth watering, I tell my wife she should learn to make some of those dishes from your wife."

Shivkaran was really surprised, but he did not say anything to him. He entered the house quietly and acted as though everything was normal. How-



prasad. I know this won't be as delectable as the delicacies your wife makes—my wife can't cook so well—but do take these and taste them."

Shivkaran was astonished. "My wife knows how to make plain dishes. She cooks well, but she can't make fancy sweets at all!" he declared.

ever, he did want to know the truth. The next day, he got up and set off for town as usual. However, he did not really go to town. After a while, he secretly came back home through the back door and hid in the loft in the kitchen.

Radha came into the kitchen after a while. She set about making some deli-



cious things to eat. Shivkaran's mouth started watering. She made some *puri* and *kheer* - a kind of rice pudding. She also made some laddoos. Then she got fresh vegetables from the market and cooked them. She had also bought a piece of tender sugarcane in the market cut into bits. After that she set the food out nicely and ate it all up. Shivkaran's stomach rumbled and his mouth watered, but he did not say anything. He quietly slipped out of the house when Radha was not looking.

When it was night, Shivkaran came back home limping with a big bandage tied around his foot.

"My goodness, what has happened to you?" asked Radha alarmed.

"A snake bit me," replied Shivkaran casually.

"O dear, was it a big snake?" Radha asked anxiously.

"Yes, it was as big as your sugarcane and my foot is as swollen as the *puris* you made," he answered slyly.

Radha went pale. She thought the cat was now out of the bag and Shivkaran would be very angry. She stood still with guilt and fear.

Suddenly the expression on Shivkaran's face changed. "Don't worry," he said. "I've realised my foolishness. When I saw you cook all those delicious things, my mouth watered so much that I felt I was a fool for not enjoying your cooking. After all, why does one work? When you can afford it, you must live as well as you can. There's no point in saving money at the cost of comfort and joy."

From that day Radha cooked scrumptious food every day and shared it all with her husband.



THE DIRT IN ONE'S MIND

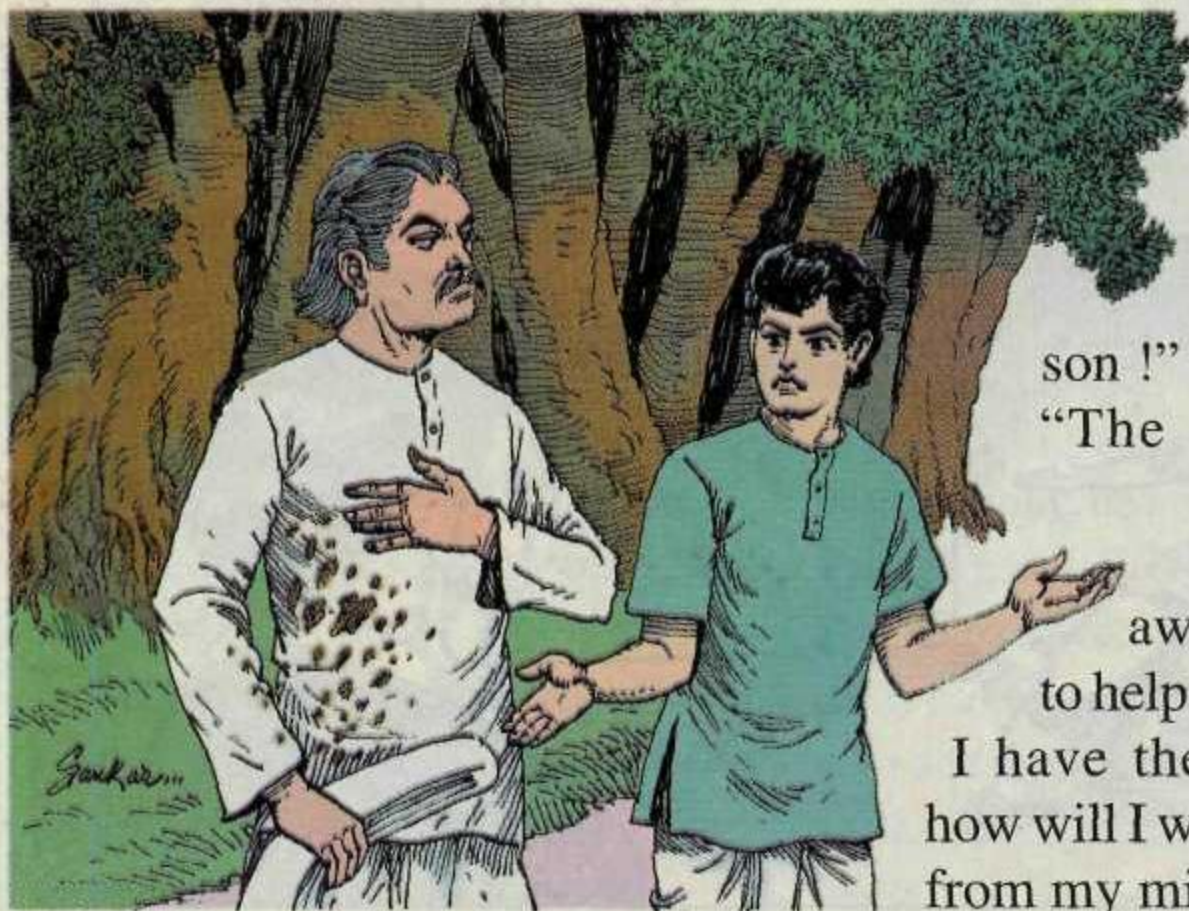
Gopal and son Gopakumar were on their way to the neighbouring village to attend a wedding. Their way was through a forest. They neared a pond which had very little water. They saw a kid struggling to come out of the slush in the pond.

Gopal took pity on the little animal. He got into the pond and picked up the kid and brought it to the bank and put it down on the ground. As it tried to shake off the mud from its head, face and body, some mud fell on Gopal's shirt and *dhoti*. Meanwhile, the kid had sprinted away into the forest.

"Father! See how the goat has repaid you for rescuing it from the slush!" Gopakumar remarked, not appreciating his father's act in sympathy for the animal. "How can you now go for the wedding,

wearing that shirt and dhoti with the mud particles on?"

"Look, my son!" replied Gopal. "The mud on the dress can be easily washed away. But if I fail to help someone when I have the opportunity, how will I wash off that dirt from my mind?"



Tales from other lands (China)

THE ANGRY DRAGON

A long time ago, there was a lovely village near a mountain in China. The mountain used to be full of trees and the clouds from the sea far away would often rest on that mountain and shed their waters down the sides in little rivers and waterfalls. All that water reached the village, and it made the crops grow well. The people of the village had plenty to eat, and everyone was very happy.

Suddenly, all that changed. The clouds stopped coming to the mountain and there were no rains. The crops stopped growing and even the trees withered away. The people became poorer and poorer. There was also another problem that weighed on the people's mind all the time. There seemed to be a huge dragon living on top of the mountain. It breathed out fire and threw up rocks. Sometimes it bellowed in such a loud voice that all the people in the village ran into their houses. The elders in the village wondered if the dragon had something to do with the clouds staying away. They warned their children: "Don't



go anywhere near the mountain. If you do, the dragon is sure to take you away and eat you up."

All the children were really scared of the noise the dragon made and were happy to keep away. But there was one little girl called Mei-Ling. She was five years and eleven months old. She was an only child and spent a lot of time playing in her garden from where she could see the top of the mountain. Sometimes as she played there with her dolls, she could see the dragon spewing out fire and rocks and making such a racket that she couldn't even hear her dolls.

'My, what a tantrum!' she thought. 'Has no one taught that dragon how to behave? I wonder who looks after it? Maybe it's just feeling lonely.' She would often look at the top of the mountain and wonder about the dragon. The more she thought about it, the more she felt that the dragon was really lonely.

Like the rest of the villagers, Mei-Ling's family was also poor but they loved her very much. Mei-Ling's birthday drew nearer and she was almost six years old. Her parents were very happy that their daughter was growing

up so well. "Who would you like to invite to your party?" they asked her.

"I'll invite all my family and friends and I'll ask the dragon as well," she announced. And she started climbing the mountain to invite the dragon.

"Come back! Come back, you foolish one!" yelled her mother. "The dragon will kill you!"

When Mei-Ling had got halfway up the mountain, there was a huge roar.

From where she stood, Mei-Ling could hear some of the words the dragon was shouting:

"I live alone, I roar alone, I'm the nasty dragon. Be-gone, be-gone!"

There was a rush of hot stones down the mountain and Mei-Ling ran back home.

"I hope that taught you to listen to your elders," scolded her mother.

The next day Mei-Ling's father said: "Mei-Ling, your birthday guest list is almost ready. Would you like to add anyone to it?"

"Well, I really want to add the dragon," declared Mei-Ling and set off for the mountain once again.

"Come back, you stupid, silly girl!"





roared her father beside himself with worry. "The dragon will pick you up and carry you away from here for ever!"

But Mei-Ling would not come down. She almost reached the top. Now she could see the enormous dragon with its long, huge tail. It was thumping the tail and belting out a fearful song:

I live alone, I sing alone, for I have no one, no one!

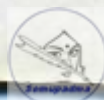
Fierce flames flew out of the dragon's mouth and almost licked at Mei-Ling's

shirt. She ran back home.

"I hope you've learnt your lesson," said her father. "Don't ever do anything so foolish again."

Mei-Ling's birthday dawned beautiful and clear. It was a lovely day for a party.

Mei-Ling's mother said: "All your friends have brought you a few gifts, all that they could spare. A little rice saved from the harvest and a few fruits from the trees. Would you like anything else



today, for it is your birthday?"

"I want the dragon at my party," said Mei-Ling. And she set off to climb the mountain. Her father called her back. Her mother begged her not to be so foolish.

Her grandparents begged her: "Go no farther, Mei-Ling!"

Her friends pleaded: "O Mei-Ling, don't do this terrible thing." But Mei-Ling paid no heed to anyone. On she went higher and higher until she reached the very top.

There was a fire up there and the ground shook with the dragon's song. Mei-Ling wanted to see the dragon so much that she wasn't afraid any more. This time she heard the dragon clearly:

I live alone in my deep dark cave. Who comes here so daring and brave?

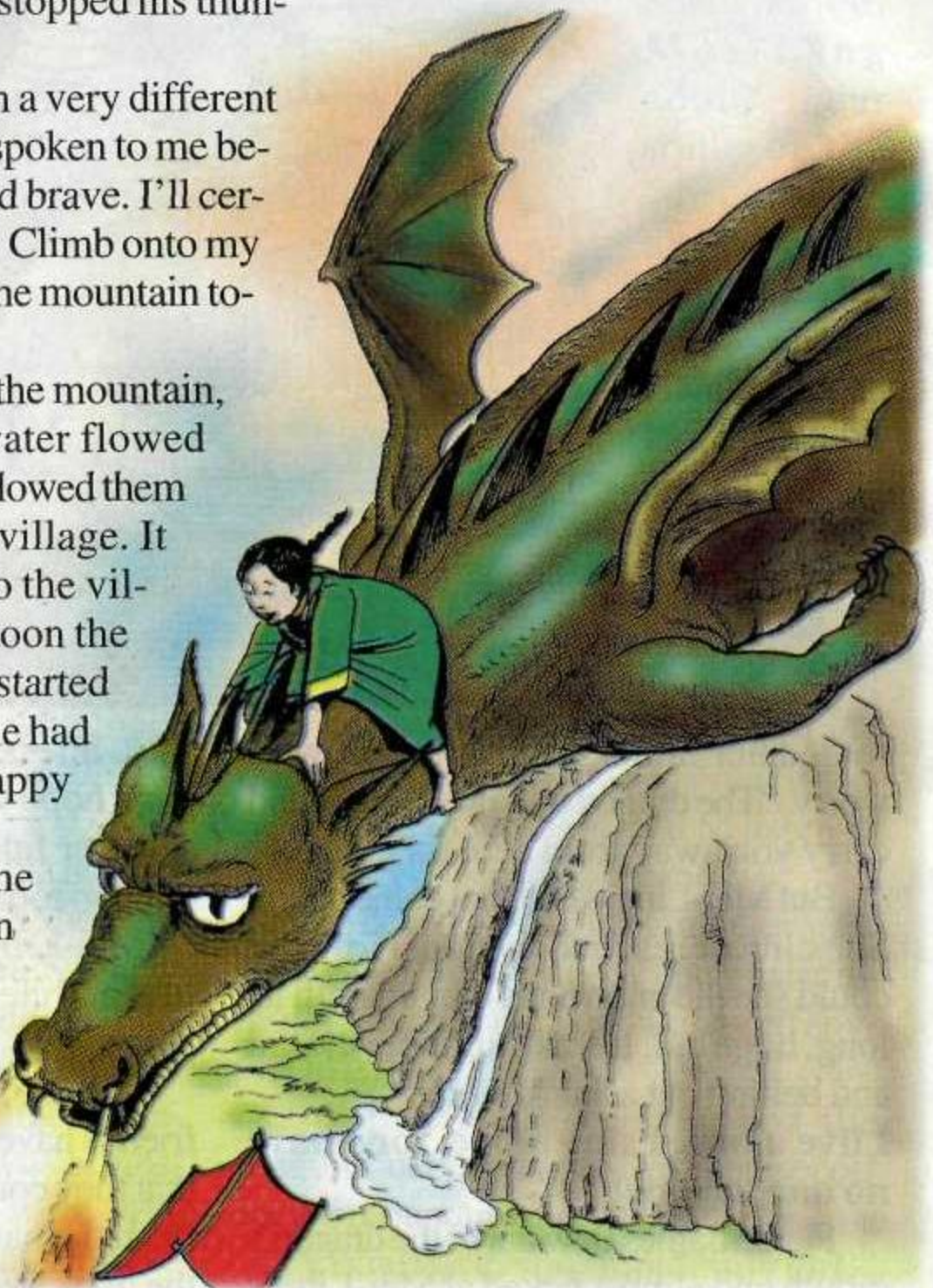
Mei-Ling said: "You're certainly fearsome but lonely as well. So I've come to invite you to my party. My name is Mei-Ling."

The dragon suddenly stopped his thundering and bellowing.

"Mei-Ling," he said in a very different voice, "nobody has ever spoken to me before. You're very kind and brave. I'll certainly come to your party. Climb onto my back and we'll go down the mountain together."

As they moved down the mountain, a cool, blue ribbon of water flowed behind them. The river followed them all the way down to the village. It gave cool, fresh water to the village forever after that. Soon the trees grew and the crops started thriving again. The people had plenty to eat and were happy once again.

As for the dragon, he stayed in that village in China and the people thought of him as a mascot that brought good. Mei-Ling became a great heroine and lived to celebrate many, many birthdays.



BUNTU AND THE TIGER

Buntu had lately been recruited by a big landlord as a servant in his household. His duty was to serve the landlord's son, Bablu. When Bablu went to school, Buntu accompanied him there. He waited till the recess, when he would hold the tiffin box open for Bablu who picked up an item or two as he pleased. Buntu, whom the landlord's cook never gave enough to appease his hunger, would like to eat whatever was left over, but Bablu would never give him that opportunity. He would throw all that to the stray dogs and crows, while poor Buntu looked on.

Buntu followed Bablu back home when the school was over for the day.

Bablu was in the habit of telling tall tales. As his listeners would often grow suspicious about the veracity of what he said, he needed somebody to support him, who would speak like an eye-witness and assert that what Bablu said was a fact. Bablu expected Buntu to do that. Buntu did not disappoint him.

Once, on a festive occasion, Bablu was paying a visit to a relative's house



in the town. Buntu accompanied him, carrying his luggage. Buntu was, of course, always ready to serve his young master, but Bablu would be unnecessarily rude towards him. He wanted to show to others that he was the master!

At the relative's place, the boys and girls of the neighbourhood welcomed Bablu. But before long, they grew more interested in Buntu. That was because Buntu was a fine story-teller. Besides, he was courteous and helpful to everybody.

This, naturally, made Bablu unhappy. He must shine brilliant through his talks and prove that he was made of extraordinary stuff.



"Look here, you fool, don't try to show off in front of my friends, do you understand? They're *my* friends. You're clever, I admit. But your duty is to use your cleverness only to assert that what I said is right."

"I'll do so, Bablu sir!" agreed Buntu.

That evening, a number of boys and girls had gathered round Bablu and

Buntu, when someone asked Bablu: "Have you ever been inside a forest?"

"What do you mean? The forest begins where my village ends! I often go into it for hunting, don't I, Buntu?"

"Of course you do, sometimes twice a day. To shoot down a rabbit or even a deer is just snapping a mosquito for you!" said Buntu.

That encouraged Bablu very much. "Ha, ha, Buntu always speaks out the truth. I wouldn't have myself bragged about my own capacity!" said Bablu feigning modesty.

"But don't you encounter any tiger in the forest?" asked a town boy, quite impressed by Bablu.

"What do you mean? It happened only a few days ago. I love to swim in

the lake in the forest. As I was coming out of the lake, I saw a huge tiger waiting for me on its bank – not with any good intention, you know!"

"We're so happy that its intention remained unfulfilled. Otherwise, you wouldn't be telling us this exciting experience today. But what did you do?"

"What did I do? Well, I splashed water onto its face

and shouted

'begone!' – and it was gone!" said Bablu.

"Is this true?" several of them asked Buntu.

"True, true,"

confirmed Buntu. Bablu's face brightened up. Buntu continued: "I was coming towards the lake with my master's clothes when I saw the tiger. I patted its whiskers, as was my habit. They were certainly wet. My master had by all means splashed water onto the naughty creature's face."

"Bravo!" shouted all the boys and girls as they surrounded Buntu, ignoring Bablu. "You're really great!" they exclaimed.

Looking at the grim faced Bablu, Buntu knew that he would have to look for a job somewhere else before long.



Once upon a time, there lived a young barber. However, he was not too keen to be a barber and would do nothing the whole day except look into the mirror in his hand and sigh, 'I'm made for better things. Why should I spend my time cutting people's hair and shaving their ugly faces?'

His parents got fed up with him and told him that he was old enough to earn his living and he should start doing just that. But to no avail. The barber just peered into the mirror and lamented his fate. His mother was finally really exasperated and she chased him out with a broom. The barber felt so humiliated, he vowed not to go back till he had made a fortune.

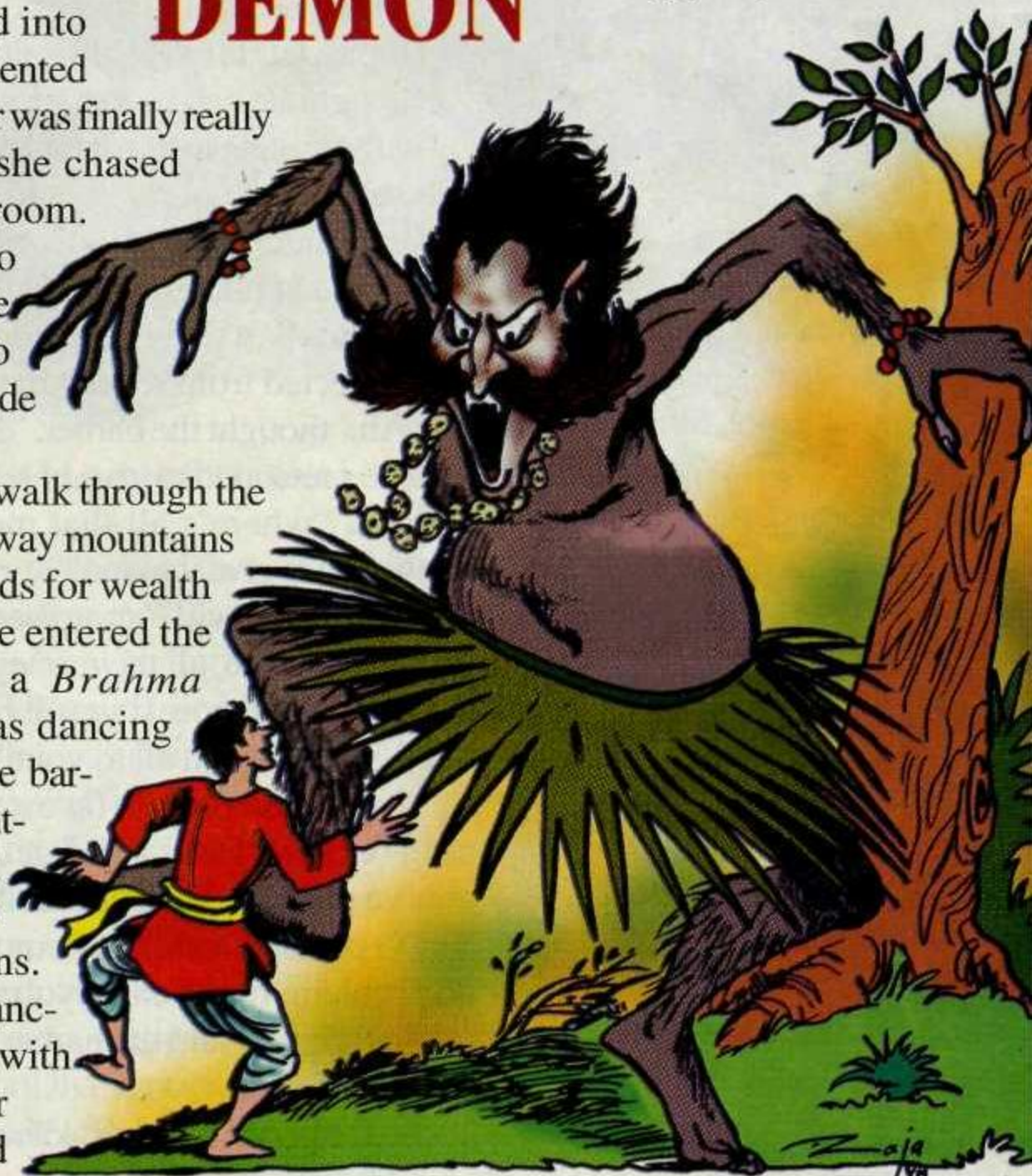
He decided to walk through the forests to the far away mountains and pray to the gods for wealth and fortune. As he entered the forest, he met a *Brahma rakshasa* who was dancing away furiously. The barber was quite frightened, but he did not allow fear to paralyse his brains. He, too, started dancing, keeping pace with the rakshasa. After a while he asked

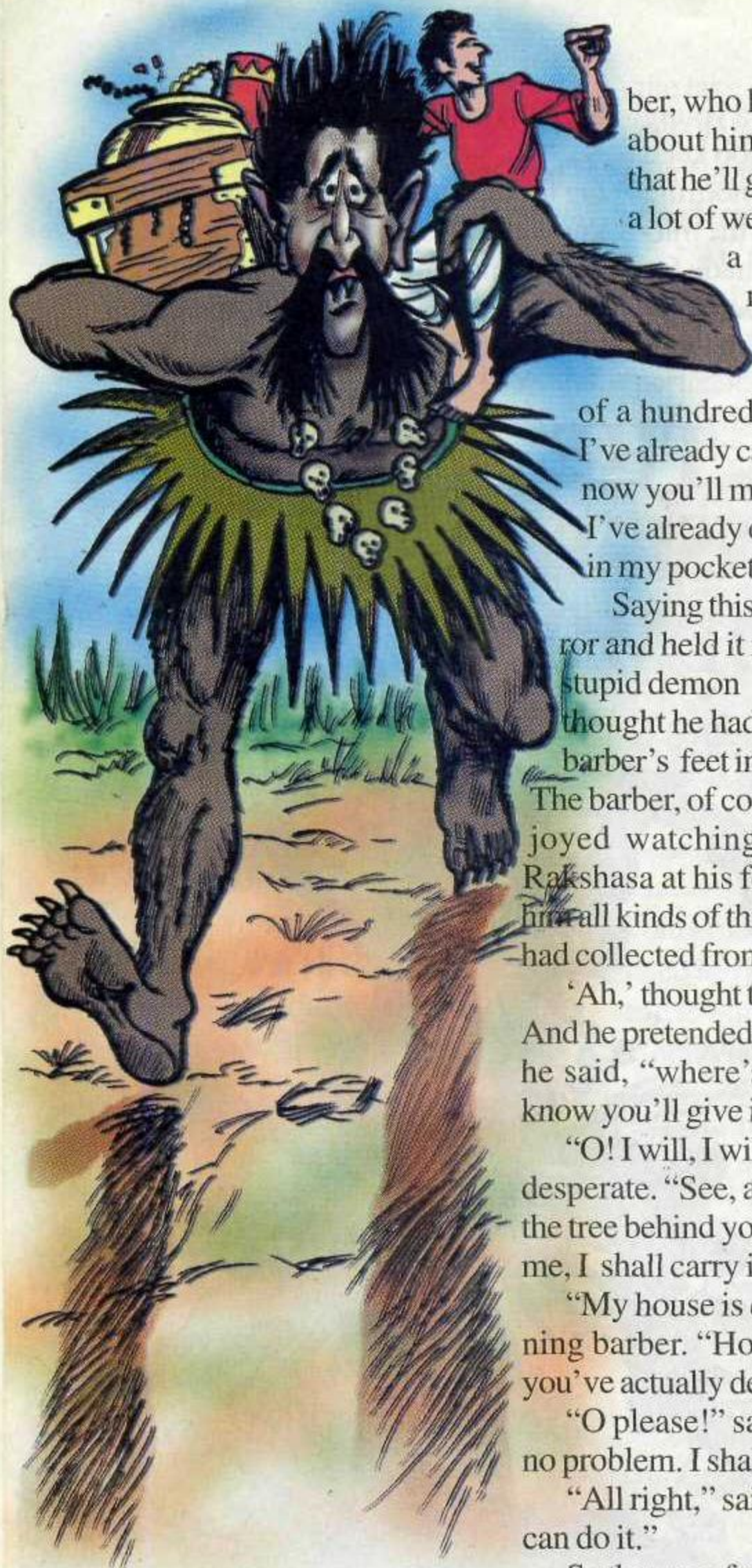
the demon why he was dancing.

"Ah," said the demon, "I was waiting for that question. I knew you didn't know the reason or else you wouldn't have joined me. I always dance when I'm about to have a good meal. You look like a well-fed man and will make a delicious meal. That's why I'm dancing. But tell me, why are *you* dancing?"

"I'm also happy because I'm at the end of a long quest," said the bar-

THE ENSLAVED DEMON





ber, who had managed to keep his wits about him. "Our king has proclaimed that he'll give his beautiful daughter and a lot of wealth to anyone who'll capture

a hundred and one Brahmarakshasas. You see, the prince is sick, and he'll get well only with the blood from the hearts of a hundred and one Brahmarakshasas. I've already captured a hundred of them and now you'll make it a hundred and one. See, I've already captured your soul and you're in my pocket."

Saying this, the barber pulled out his mirror and held it in front of the Rakshasa. The stupid demon saw himself in the mirror and thought he had been captured. He fell at the barber's feet in terror and pleaded for mercy. The barber, of course, would not agree. He enjoyed watching the strong and powerful Rakshasa at his feet. The Rakshasa promised him all kinds of things, including the treasury he had collected from seven kings.

'Ah,' thought the barber, 'this is my chance.' And he pretended to give in reluctantly. "Well," he said, "where's all that money? How do I know you'll give it to me?"

"O! I will, I will!" promised the demon, now desperate. "See, all the money is in that hole in the tree behind you. If you'll promise to release me, I shall carry it all to your house."

"My house is quite far away," said the cunning barber. "How will I get there to see that you've actually deposited all the money there?"

"O please!" said the demon. "That's really no problem. I shall carry you as well."

"All right," said the barber. "Let's see if you can do it."

So the poor, foolish Rakshasa, quite unaware



that it was only his fear and ignorance that was keeping him captive, carried all the wealth on one shoulder and the barber on the other and set off for the barber's house. After depositing the money and the barber safely, he begged to be released. But the barber knew he was onto something good and refused to release him.

"Ah!" he said. "Do you think you can regain your soul that easily? People who lose their souls live in bondage. You must work for it. Look at all those paddy fields ready for harvesting. They belong to my family. Go and cut all that paddy and bring it in. Only then will I release you."

The poor demon decided there was no way out, and sadly set off to work in the fields. When he was cutting the paddy, another demon passed by and asked him what he was doing. So our demon told him the whole sad story.

His friend could not believe his ears and said: "How on earth did you get into this mess? Don't you know demons are much more powerful than humans?"

The 'captive' demon insisted that the barber had his soul in his pocket for he had seen it himself. So, the other de-

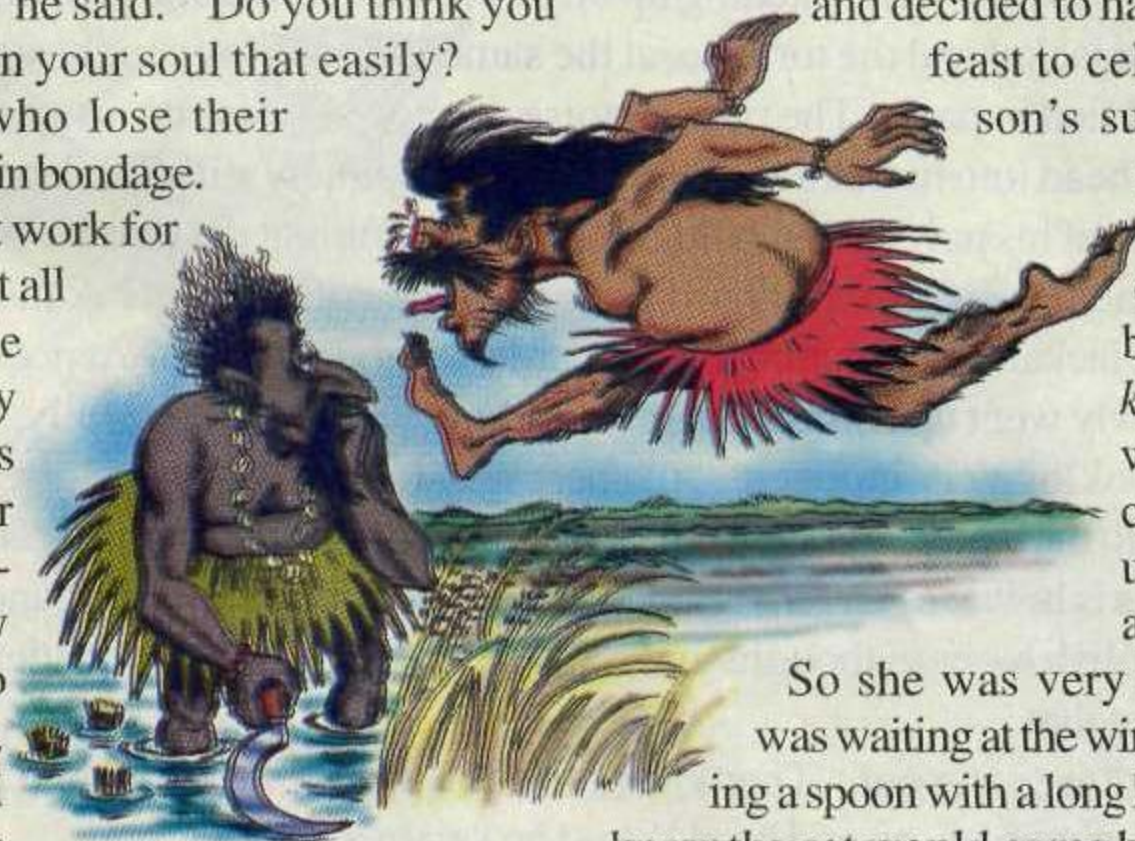
mon decided to investigate matters. He went to the barber's house by the back gate so that he could sneak in and see if the barber really had the souls of a hundred and one demons.

Now, the barber's mother, who had chased him out of the house with a broomstick, wanted to make amends and decided to have a grand feast to celebrate her son's success and return.

She had cooked a big pot of *kheer* which the cat had just upturned and eaten.

So she was very angry and was waiting at the window holding a spoon with a long handle. She knew the cat would come back for the rest of the *kheer*. The demon's friend just then put in his hairy face and the old lady brought down the spoon quickly. The sharp edge of the handle cut off his nose. In pain and fright, the demon ran away, thinking that these humans would have something more up their sleeves.

The 'captive' demon, in the meantime, finished harvesting all the paddy and came back to the barber to ask for his release. The barber relented and this time showed him the other side of the mirror. The demon went away, quite happily convinced that his soul that had been captured was now free.



A Friend in Need is a Friend Indeed

In the middle of a dense forest there was a lake. A tortoise lived in the clear and cool waters of the lake. A jackal lived in a cave nearby. The tortoise and the jackal were friends and got on famously together. They would often sit by the shade of the bamboo trees that grew beside the lake and talk of everything under the sun.

One day, as they were catching up on news, a leopard came up to drink water. He saw the jackal and the tortoise, at the same time as they caught sight of him. The jackal fled in panic. The poor tortoise was too slow to run away or hide. He pulled his head into his hard shell and stayed absolutely still. The leopard with a swift swipe of his paw caught hold of him. Then holding the tortoise between his paws he tried to eat him. But hard as he tried, he could not break the tortoise's shell. The jackal was watching the leopard's struggle from a distance.

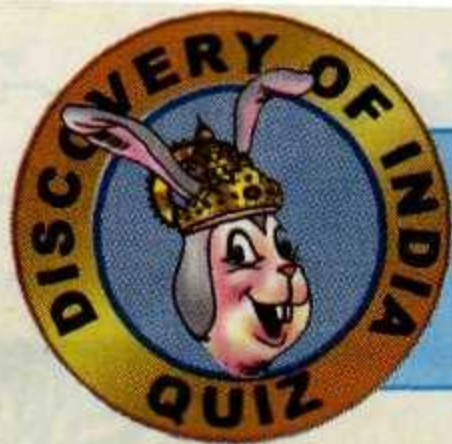
He slowly went up to the leopard and addressed him respectfully. "Dear sir," he said, looking very innocent, "the best way to deal with a tortoise shell is to throw it into the water. The shell will soak and get soft, and then you can peel it off easily. This is how we have traditionally done it in our family. Try it and see."

The foolish leopard thought that it made sense. "What a good idea!" he said and did just that.

The tortoise sang out, "Thank you, friend jackal! I was born and bred in the lake, Mr. Leopard, born and bred." And he swam away quickly.

Several birds on the trees around the lake, who witnessed the leopard's humiliation, laughed and tittered so loudly that the leopard scampered away, never to be seen again. The jackal and the tortoise continued to be friends.





CHANDAMAMA

ENRICH YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Answers to the quiz published in this issue will appear in the next issue. Meanwhile, try to find the answers yourself and enrich your knowledge of India's antiquity and heritage.



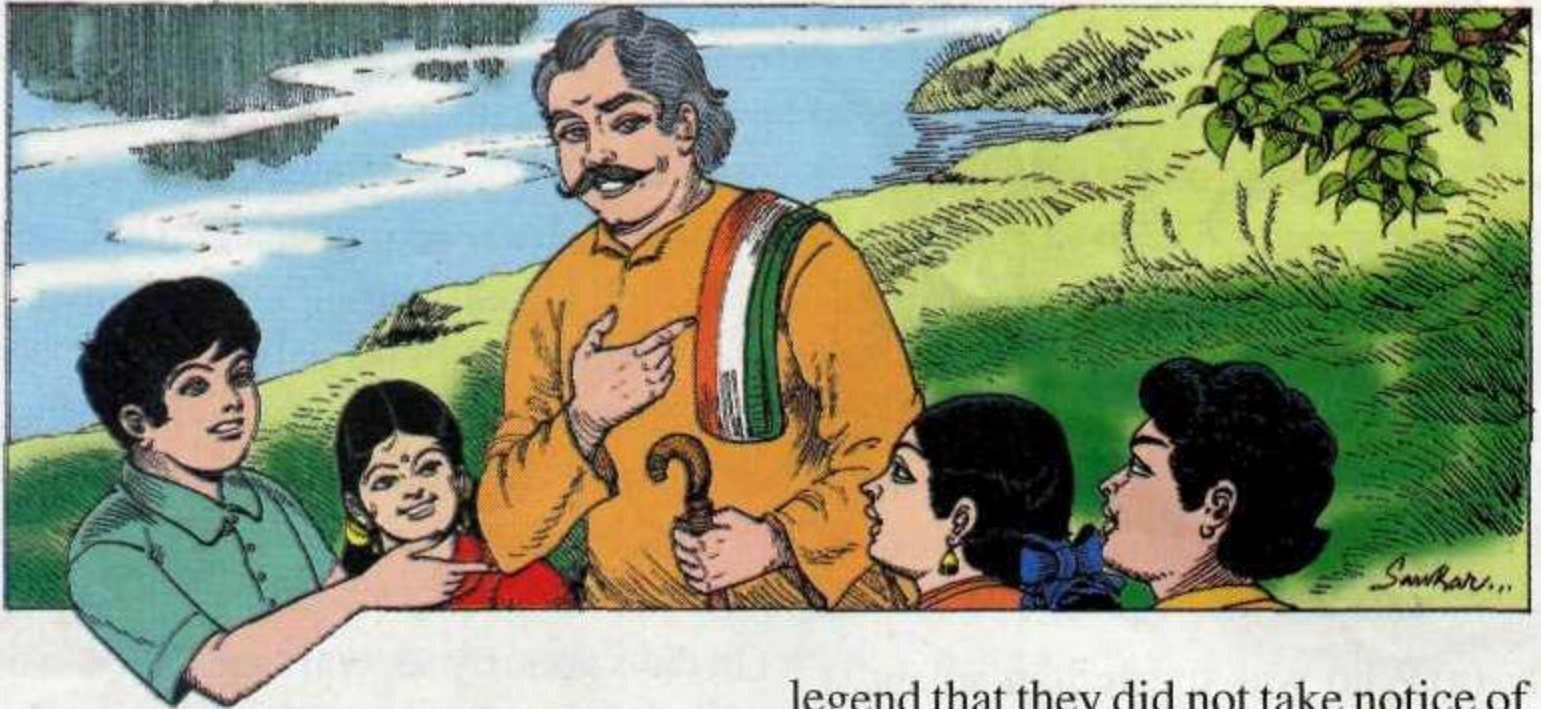
1. (a) Who was the Indian scientist who, a thousand years before Copernicus, had said that the earth revolved around the sun?
- (b) Where in India is to be found a symbol of Shiva which appears and disappears?
- (c) Who, according to the ancient Indian literature, was the boy who learnt what happens to our consciousness after death, through a meeting with the god of Death?
- (d) Can you name the three famous atheistic philosophers of ancient India?
- (e) Who is the monarch who introduced a new religious faith, but failed to popularize it?

In days gone by several sages lived in the forest. Among their children were a young man and a young lady who were to be married to each other before long. But one day the young lady was bitten by a snake and died. The young man was in great anguish. With the help of the god of Love, he entered the world of the dead and located the soul of his bride. Then he struck a deal with the god of Death. According to that, the remaining years of his life were to be divided into two halves and his bride was to live with one half of his life. Thus did the young lady come back to life.

Who was the young man and who was the young lady?



8. HOW THE LAND BECAME SACRED



It was the Dusserah or the Puja vacation. A few boys and girls of the neighbourhood had meanwhile got sufficient hint of the great treasure their friends, Sandip and Chameli, had come to possess. At first they wondered why the brother and sister had failed to turn up to play with them as often as they used to during the earlier vacations. Then they spied upon the two regularly taking walks with an elderly man, listening to him with rapt attention.

One day, Kishore and Roma, another pair of brother and sister, quietly followed Professor Devnath and the two children along the river-bank. Sandip and Chameli were so deeply engrossed in their grandfather's narration of some

legend that they did not take notice of their friends stalking them for almost half-an-hour. It was only when the professor ended his story and Kishore could not check himself from exclaiming, "How sweet!" that all the three, who walked in front of them, looked back.

It was no doubt a pleasant surprise for Sandip and Chameli. They introduced their friends to their Grandpa who was happy. "I was wondering how I don't meet any of my grandchildren's friends. You must pardon me, Kishore and Roma, if I'm guilty of depriving you of their company," said the ever-genial professor.

"No, sir, we generally do not let the guilty go without punishment!" said Roma. "You've to tell stories to us, too!"

f India

ious quest for Truth through the ages

she added.

The professor laughed. "Since I'm richer by two more grandchildren, I'm willing to pay the price for it," he said.

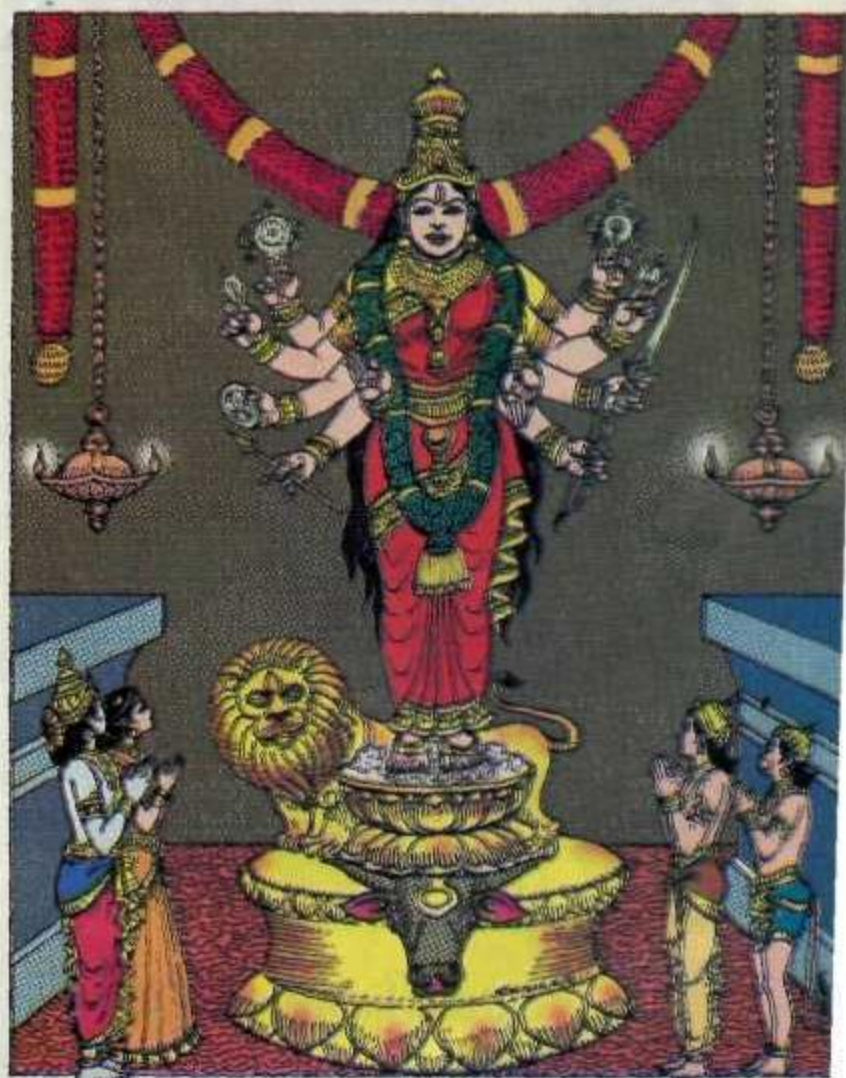
It was decided that Kishore and Roma would join their friends the next day for a session with the professor. But they brought with them two other friends of theirs, George and Julie. It was late in the afternoon, and they all sat down on the sprawling green lawns of the bungalow owned by the parents of Sandip and Chameli. But before long, a loudspeaker started blaring some film songs and the volume of the sound was deafening.

"It's festive time, you know - Durga Puja," remarked Kishore.

"It's because of the insensitiveness of the people to the feelings of others. Festive times have come and gone since times immemorial. People have invoked the Mother Goddess year after year. Prayers have gone up to Her in the form of songs. But some people's devotion need not become a cause of irritation for others. The loudspeaker has made all the difference. The volume of the sound indicates the arrogance of the organizers of the festivities. My children, when you go to organize any such event, take care to see that your programme

does not become a cause of annoyance or inconvenience to others," said the professor.

"Sir, how and when did this tradition

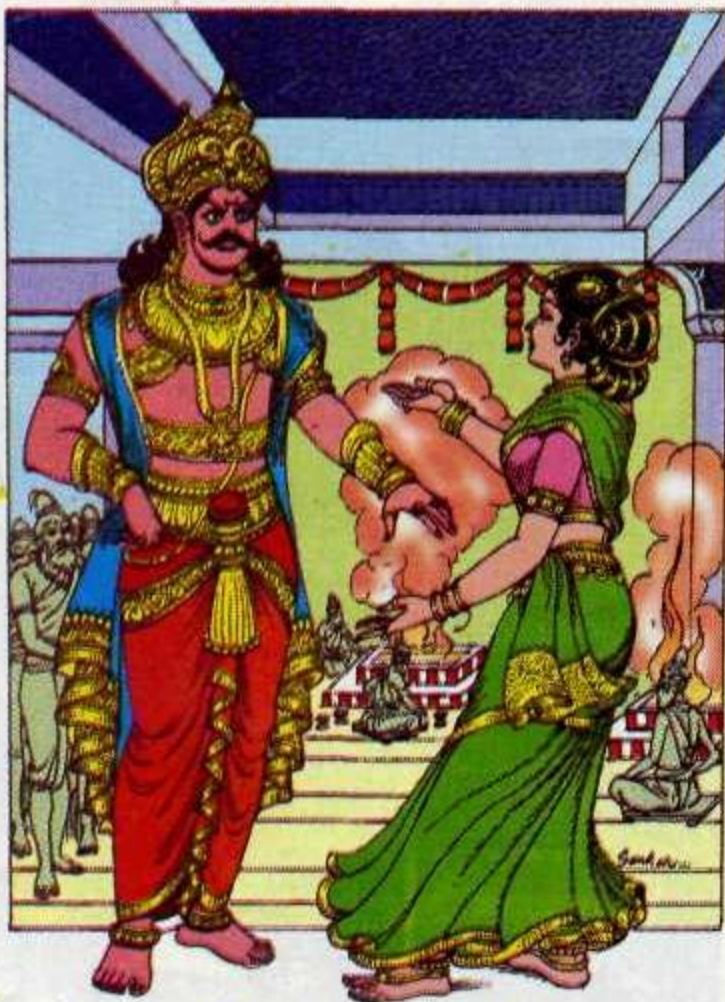


of Dusserah begin?" asked Roma.

"It is believed that Lord Rama, after his victory over the demon-king, Ravana, began this tradition in the way of paying his gratitude to the Divine Mother. The term Dusserah literally means the annihilation of the ten - that is to say - the ten-headed demon. I'm sure, you know that Ravana had ten heads."



But I cannot vouchsafe for the veracity of this explanation of the origin of the festival. There are other explanations, too. What is important, the worship of the Divine Mother in several forms began in a remote past. There are temples dedicated to Her throughout India," said Grandpa.



"How did that happen?" asked more than one listener.

"We've to go back to the beginning of creation. When you study spirituality and the great scriptures of India, you'll know that creation was a process in which the infinite hid itself in things finite. It is a kind of play that we call hide-and-seek. The infinite spirit does it for the joy of self-discovery.

"Brahma is the creator, you know

that, don't you? One of His sons, Daksha, was responsible for the creation of the gods, demi-gods, demons, plants and animals. Daksha had sprung out of Brahma's right thumb. He married Virani, who sprang out of Brahma's left thumb. Perhaps that is why the bride sits to the left of the bridegroom even today. They had fifty daughters. Forty-nine of them were married to gods and the early Rishis, who were not human beings like us but supernatural beings. Men were born out of them.

"However, Sati, the youngest daughter of Daksha, married Shiva against his wish. Daksha never pardoned her for her action. Soon thereafter Daksha performed a Yajna—a sacred fire rite. He invited all the gods and Rishis, all his daughters and sons-in-law for the occasion, but not Shiva and Sati. Nevertheless, the news reached Sati and she set out for her father's abode which was at Kankhol, near Haridwar. Shiva warned her against her visit, as they had not been invited. But Sati asserted that a daughter does not need an invitation to visit her parents' home.

"Unfortunately, as soon as Daksha saw Sati, he began abusing Shiva. According to him, Shiva was a tramp who had no proper home, who did not care to dress properly, and who was served by spirits and goblins.

"Sati, unable to bear this tirade, threw herself into the fire and died. All were stunned at this unexpected develop-



ment. Some spirits who had come as Sati's escorts ran to Kailash, Shiva's abode, and informed him about the tragedy. The furious God plucked a lock from his head and dashed it on the ground. Out of it sprang up a thousand-armed demon, Virbhadra.

"Virbhadra rushed to Kankhol and wrought havoc there, destroying the Yajna and scaring away all the guests. Soon Shiva, too, was there. His blazing trident beheaded Daksha. Later, when Shiva calmed down, a goat's head was transplanted on Daksha's shoulders.

"Shiva lifted Sati's body, threw it over His shoulder, and roamed the land, forgetful of everything. Vishnu had to use His Weapon, the *Sudarshana*, to cut down the body into pieces. They fell at different places. Now, Sati was none other than the Divine Mother, a fact the great sages knew. Wherever a limb of Sati fell, there a shrine was built to Her and thus we had several of them, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. That is why

the land of India is sacred even at the gross physical plane.

"Since this happened long, long ago, the worship of the Divine Mother has prevailed since an unrecorded time in the past. It is the same power which manifests as Durga, Kali, Chandi, and by other names and characteristics," concluded Grandpa.

"This is a legend, is it?" asked Chameli.

"You may call it a legend. But to be more accurate, this is a myth. A myth is a very old story concealing some great truth. The study of myths or the collection of myths is called mythology. India is very rich in mythology," said Grandpa and he stood up as he had some important visitors coming to meet him.

"When can we hear some more myths, sir?" asked Ashok.

"Am I not at your disposal?" said the professor, laughing.

- Visvavasu

(To continue)



Tit for Tat

There was a terrible drought in the village of Rampur. The rivers had run dry. What little was there in the wells and ponds was muddy and not really fit for drinking. But just outside Rampur, there was a deep tank that still had water. The people trudged all the way there to fetch water.

Krishna collected water in pots for ten families. Each family paid him ten rupees every month. It was hard work, but this was how Krishna earned his living. He was an honest man and did his work well. He would carry the pot of water to each house without fail every single day.

However, one day a thorn got into Krishna's heel. It was so painful that the poor man could barely walk. He could not hobble all the way to the tank to fetch water. That day he did not deliver water to anybody. Since he was always so regular, the people of the houses he went to were understanding and did not really say anything. Except Virabahu who was not so forgiving. When he paid Krishna for that month, he deducted a rupee for the day he did not fetch water.

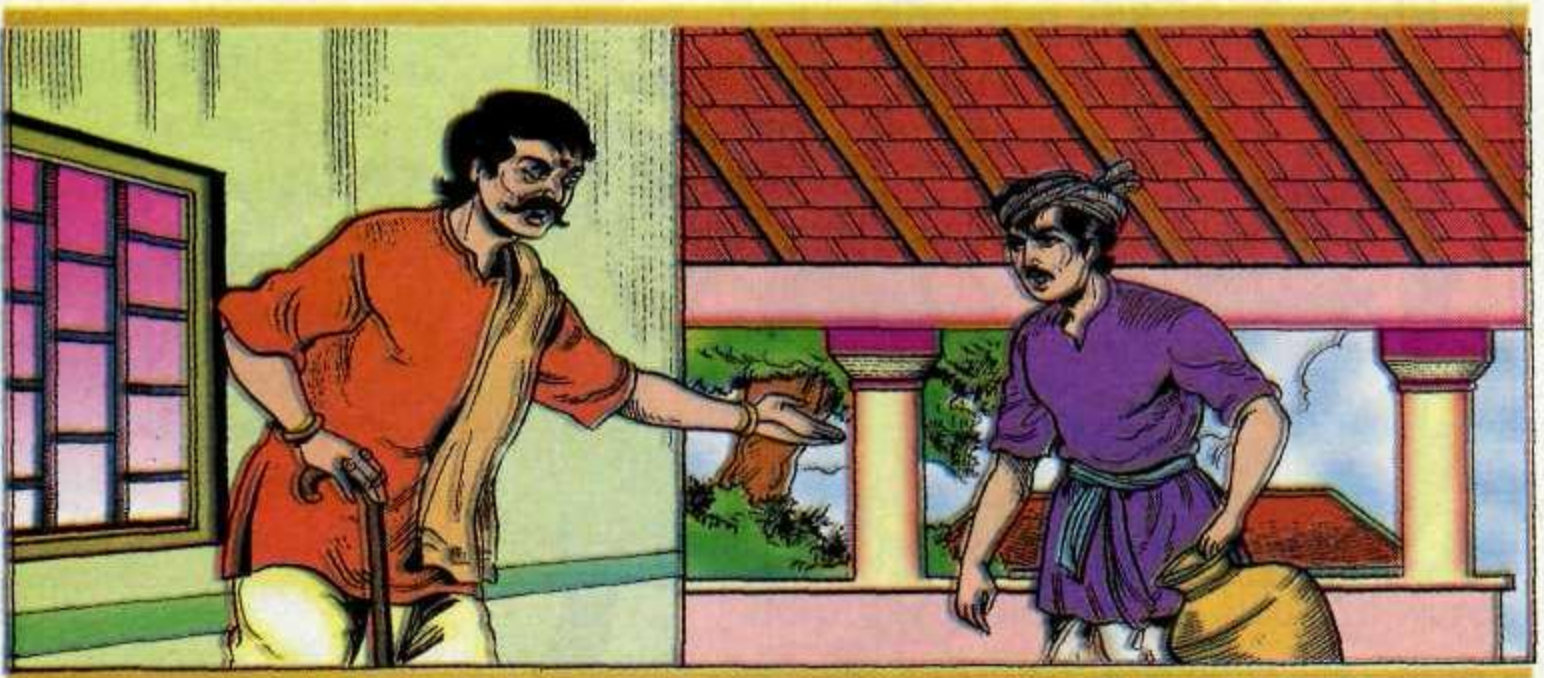
Krishna protested : "I've delivered water every day without fail for so many days. I couldn't come that day because I was in pain and not able to walk. How could you cut a rupee from my wages for a small thing like that?"

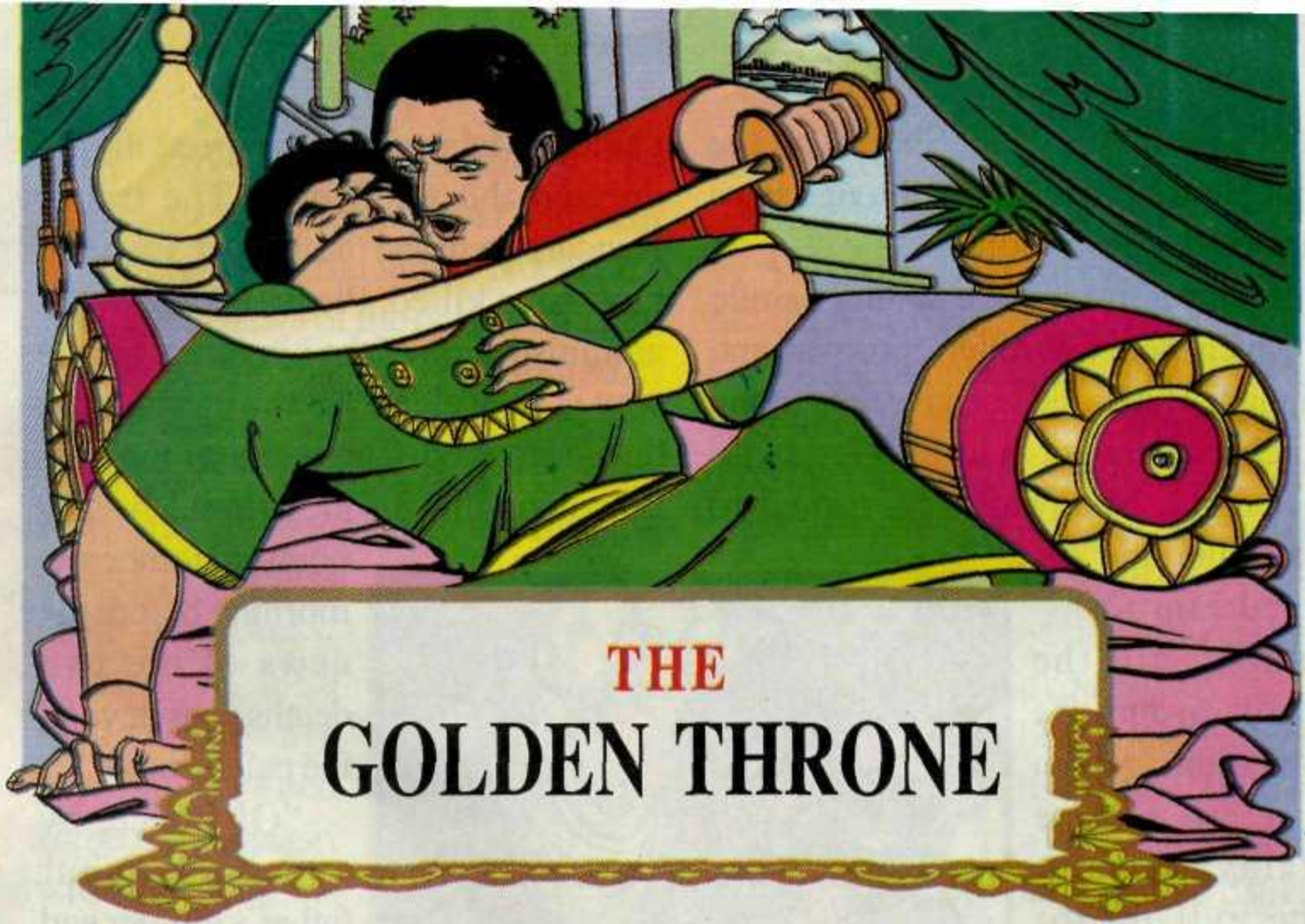
Virabahu's response was rude and curt. "How am I concerned with *your* troubles?" he asked.

Krishna went away quietly. After a few days, when Virabahu was expecting guests, Krishna deliberately did not take water to his house that day. The next day Virabahu was very angry. "Do you know how much trouble I had yesterday? Why didn't you bring water?" he scolded.

"How am I concerned with *your* troubles?" retorted Krishna. "You may cut a rupee from my wages if you want!"

Virabahu could not find an answer.





[The story so far: Prince Vijayadatta of Kaundinya marries Princess Srilekha of Kalindi. A golden throne is dug out from near the palace, and he is about to ascend the throne when the images on the steps come alive and pose a question each which he has to answer. The first one is answered to the maiden's satisfaction. The second one tells him the story of Prince Malayadhwaja of Suvarnagiri who leaves Krishnachandra's gurukul when his father Kushadhwaja is assassinated. On his way to the capital, he meets his father's friend Simhagupta and seeks his help. Simhagupta's adventurous daughter Princess Shalini accompanies Malayadhwaja to Suvarnagiri. They enter the capital in disguise and with the help of a loyal subject, Suketu, manage to win over the guards of the palace.]

After midnight, Malayadhwaja and Guranna quietly entered Vajrakirti's bedroom. Malayadhwaja kicked him awake. Vajrakirti woke up to see a youth with a sword in hand. Before he could scream for help, Malayadhwaja clamped his hand over his mouth and said: "You coward! You deceitfully attacked my kingdom, and killed my sleeping father in the foulest way. But I

have woken you up and will kill you fairly." He then plunged his sword into Vajrakirti's chest.

Meanwhile with Veeranna's help Shalini, disguised as a man, entered the traitorous general Kandarpaketu's bedroom. Before he was awake, she pierced him with a fatal poisonous needle. As Malayadhwaja and Guranna moved stealthily towards Kandarpa-

8. ANOTHER RIDDLE ANSWERED

ketu's room, they met Shalini on the way. She told them quietly through signs that the deed was done.

Malayadhwaja gave Shalini a smile in which there was relief, approval, and triumph. But he did not have time to say much as there was a lot still left to do that night. Malayadhwaja turned to

Veeranna and ordered him to assemble all the guards on duty. He told them : "I'm P r i n c e Malayadhwaja. The evil traitor Kandarpaketu and Vajrakirti the aggressor have been punished for their sins. Tonight is risky and hazardous. Anyone who enters the palace without my permission

should be arrested. Do not allow even a bird to enter the palace. Be alert."

After that Malayadhwaja went towards the prison in the palace where he met the warden: "I'm Prince Malayadhwaja. Kandarpaketu and Vajrakirti have been killed. I've come to free the minister and the officers who were loyal to my father King Kushadhwaja."

The warden immediately released all

of them. Malayadhwaja respectfully addressed the minister: " The traitor Kandarpaketu and the usurper Vajrakirti have been killed. Please take over the administration of the kingdom, for the way is now clear. All the thorns have been removed. The name of the successor to the throne should be an-

nounced tomorrow morning before the news of the two deaths goes beyond the palace walls."

"O! Prince, by avenging your father's murder and winning back your kingdom so heroically, you've done your part. Now leave everything to me," said the minister.

"What instructions do you have for me now?" Malayadhwaja queried.

"I think you should now take some rest. Be at the court tomorrow morning. I would have made all the arrangements by then," said the minister.

After Malayadhwaja left, the minister went to the barracks with the officers. There he addressed them : "Prince Malayadhwaja is back from the gurukul. He will be crowned tomorrow morning. The kingdom's administration will



be the responsibility of the army. The families of Kandarpaketu and Vajrakirti will be imprisoned till further orders. Announce the news of the coronation and tell the people that they are invited to the ceremony."

The news of the deaths spread like wild fire. The people poured into the streets to express their happiness. Prince Malayadhwaja was duly crowned King of Suvarnagiri with the people's good wishes.

After his coronation, Malayadhwaja presented Guranna with gold and silver coins. He then called Veeranna and said: "You helped an evil and treacherous man. You're as dangerous as a poisonous snake. You're not fit for any responsibility. However, I've taken your help, and so I shall spare your life. From today, you'll look after the palace gardens."

He invited Suketu and his family to dine with him at the palace. Expressing his gratitude he said: "You have treated me as a friend even in times of trouble. Therefore, I consider you as part of my

family. You'll always be an honoured guest at the palace."

A week after his coronation, Malayadhwaja invited Shalini's father, King Simhagupta, and his family to his kingdom. He asked Simhagupta for his daughter's hand. Simhagupta was only too happy to give his consent. He

thought that Malayadhwaja had proved to be a brave and capable man and would be a good match for his adventurous daughter. He also knew that Shalini loved Malayadhwaja. The people of Suvarnagiri were happy to have an opportunity for another celebration. The royal wedding

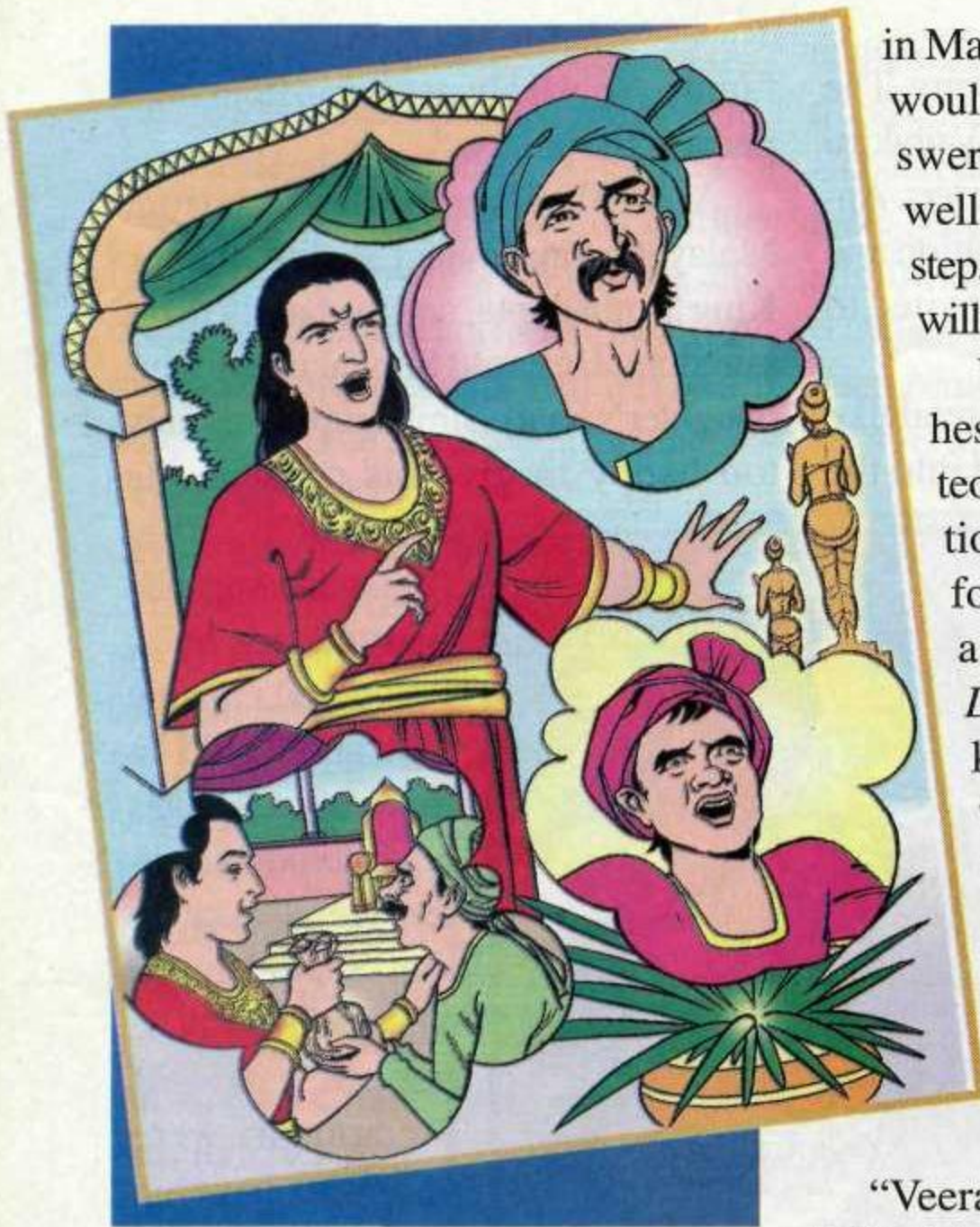


was a grand affair.

Malayadhwaja and Shalini together ruled the kingdom wisely and well for many years after that.

The spirit of the second image ended the story there and said: "Prince Vijayadatta, besides Shalini, Malayadhwaja was helped by three others in his bid to avenge his father's death and regain his throne. All of them were important for his success. For, if even one had let him down, he would have failed in





his mission. Yet, why did Malayadhwaja reward each of them in a different way?

“He treated Suketu like a beloved friend and heaped honours on him. He showered Guranna with wealth, though he was not shown any of the respect that Suketu received.

“Veeranna did not get anything at all. In fact, he was given a very lowly job for the pains he took. Was Malayadhwaja unjust or just ignorant and foolish? Did he not know any better or were his actions correct and fair? If you had been

in Malayadhwaja’s position, what would you have done? If you answer these questions wisely and well, you can climb onto the next step. Otherwise, this golden throne will vanish before your very eyes.”

Vijayadatta spoke without any hesitation: “O ! Spirit of Righteousness, Malayadhwaja’s actions were neither unjust nor foolish. He was a good leader and understood well the *Dharma* of a king. A good king treats people according to their abilities, status, and motivation. The three persons Veeranna, Guranna, and Suketu had different abilities and motives. So Malayadhwaja treated them differently.

“Veeranna was a traitor and only helped as he was forced to do so. He should have been put to death because of his treason. However, whatever his motives, as he helped Malayadhwaja in his time of need, he was pardoned and allowed to go free. He did not deserve anything better than the job he got and the pardon he enjoyed.

“Guranna was only a guard. He volunteered to help Malayadhwaja because he was loyal and patriotic. Though he was poor, he had not betrayed his king, Malayadhwaja’s father, for gold as many others had. Therefore, by showering



wealth on him, Malayadhwaja did the right thing. For he ensured that Guranna would never lead a miserable life. Guranna would have appreciated and welcomed his reward.

“Suketu treated Malayadhwaja like one of his own when it was dangerous to do so. He was loyal to Malayadhwaja and was willing to risk his life, position, and fortune to uphold what was right and to help Malayadhwaja. Therefore, Malayadhwaja in turn treated him like a dear friend of his family and invited him to play an honoured role in all the affairs of his court and kingdom. This honour was a just reward for Suketu. Besides, he would appreciate honour and respect more than money.

“I think Malayadhwaja acted rightly and very wisely. In his place I would have done the same thing.”

Prince Vijayadatta's answer pleased the spirit very much. “Prince, you’ve answered like a true king! Congratulations. You’re now fit to climb the next step,” she declared.

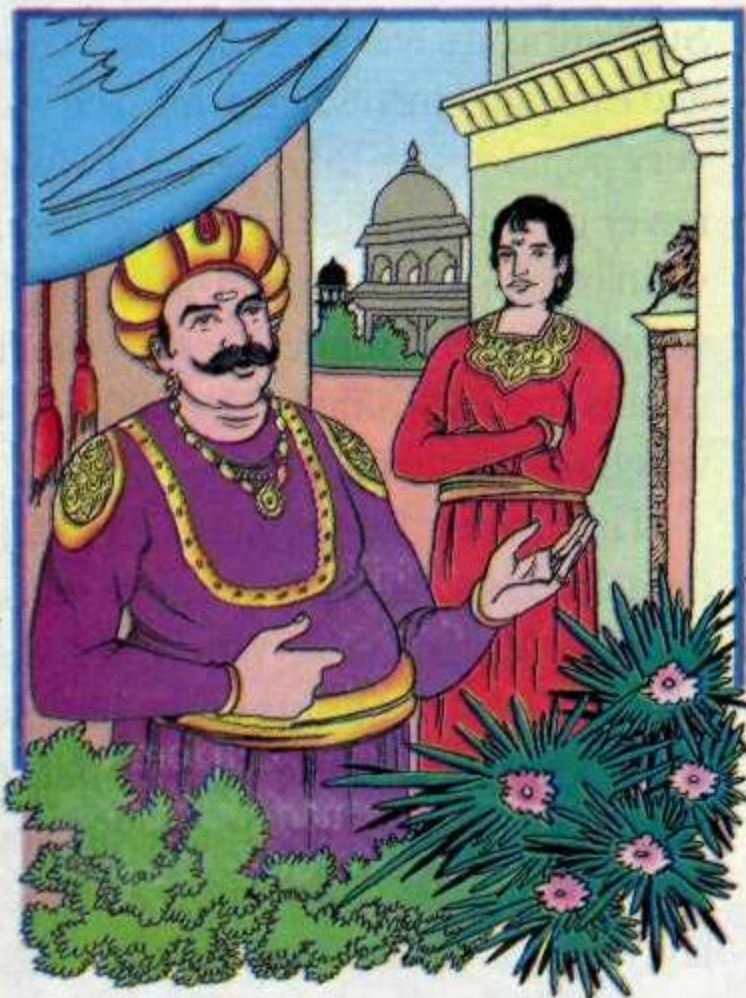
As these words were heard, the court rang with sounds of applause. Prince Vijayadatta, with a pleased look, placed his foot on the second step. As soon as he did this, the third image spoke up. She said: “O! Prince, I’m the spirit of Justice. I’m going to tell you the story of Nyaya Vardhana. Listen carefully.”

Nyaya Vardhana was the King of Chandamama

Subhadra. He was famous for the just and true judgements he gave. So he was very popular with his subjects. He was never unfair, and there was not even a whiff of injustice in his court. In fact, that's why he got the name Nyaya (which means just) Vardhana. His real name was Bala Vardhana.

The king of the neighbouring kingdom, Raja Bhowmya, was a great friend of Bala Vardhana's. When his son Prince Kumarasetu grew up, he told him: “I’m getting old and would like to crown you the next king. But before you become king, you must know all about law and justice. Meting out justice and





settling disputes is one of the main duties of a king. Our neighbour King Nyaya Vardhana is well known for his knowledge of law and sense of justice. You would do well to go and stay with him for some days.”

So Prince Kumarasetu went to stay with Nyaya Vardhana, who welcomed him like a son. Nyaya Vardhana said he would teach him all that he knew about law and justice.

“The kingdom is like a big family,” he told the prince. “The head of this family is the king. According to the great *smritis* of our land, it is the main duty of the king to protect his subjects from external aggression and internal disorder. The king should ensure that there is *Dharma* and justice in the kingdom. The

king appoints judges to help him maintain justice in the kingdom.

“Just as the children in a family quarrel, people in a kingdom, too, quarrel with one another. And like children, if they manage to settle it among themselves, well and good. If not, a judge appointed by the king has to settle their disputes. There will be many judges to hear and settle the disputes or quarrels of the people. If the judges are not able to settle a dispute, then it comes up before the king. People can appeal to the king if they are not happy with the justice they get. Since he is the last point of appeal, a king should be scrupulously fair and impartial. It is the duty of the king to look deep into the facts, arrive at the truth, and base his judgements on the true facts. True justice is important for a kingdom's well being. By imparting such justice, the king wins the love and respect of his people. The support of the people gives a king the strength of a strong army.”

King Nyaya Vardhana thus explained many aspects of law and justice. He then asked the prince to come to court the next day to watch him listen to the people's complaints and give his judgement.

There were three complaints that day. The first one was an appeal by a poor farmer called Swami. He had brought a complaint against another farmer called Chandra. Swami said: “Your majesty, Chandra is a childhood friend of mine.



We were very good friends as children. When we grew up, we vowed eternal friendship to each other and promised to get our children married to each other to deepen the bonds of friendship. I got married first and in due course had a lovely son. 'Look,' I told Chandra, 'your son-in-law is born.' Chandra was also very happy.

"He got married a little later and had a beautiful baby girl called Lakshmi. We were both happy that we would be able to carry out our promise to each other. As the children grew up, they became friends, too. All the elders in our family and community approved of the engagement.

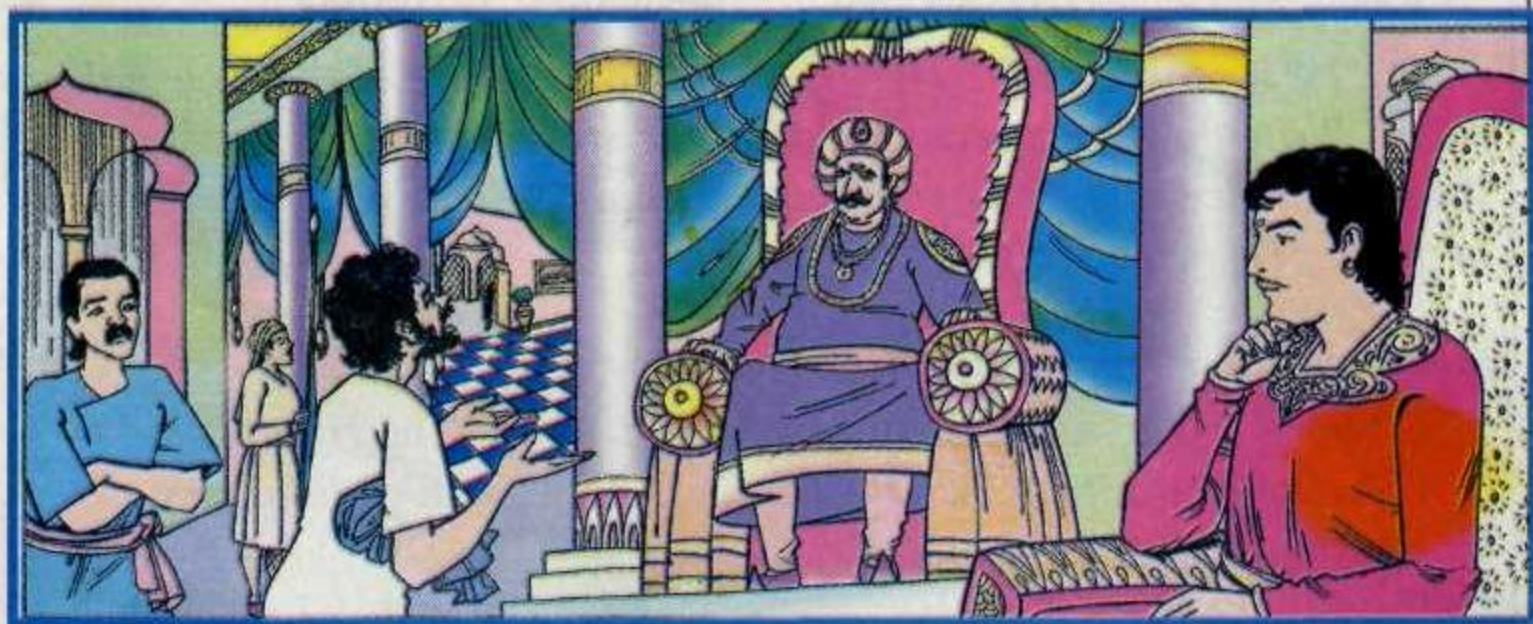
"However, as luck would have it, soon after that, my friend Chandra became prosperous. Whatever he touched turned to gold. Soon, he became a prominent person in the village. On the other hand, I went through a very bad time and lost all my wealth. I had five children. With a dwindling income and more mouths to feed, I had to sell the small piece of land

I had. Chandra's attitude also changed. He distanced himself from me and refused to have anything to do with our family. Finally, one day he and his wife declared that they would not marry their daughter to my son and broke off the engagement. He is now a rich man and so the others in the village and the community take his side. All of them say that a promise made in childhood is not binding and such pledges need not be fulfilled or considered. But I say that a promise once made must remain valid forever. A promise is made in the name of truth, and with the support of one's spirit. The physical circumstances have nothing to do with it.

"Your majesty, I have now told you everything truthfully. Please explain to Chandra that he must not go back on his word but must get his daughter Lakshmi married to my son. This is my plea. Please see that justice is done."

King Nyaya Vardhana turned to Chandra: "What do you have to say?"

(To continue)



Creative Contest

Given below is the beginning of a story; it has all the ingredients of turning out to be an interesting tale. But that 'creation' is in YOUR hands! You have to imagine the sequences — possible and probable — and give a finish to the story. Not only finish it, but think up a catchy title (heading), too. Remember, you have to do this exercise in 200 to 300 words — not less, not more. The best entry will get an attractive prize, and the entry will also be published in the magazine. The contest is meant for our young readers. Please remember to mention your name, age, class, name of school, and home address with PIN Code. Prove that YOU can write better than grown-ups; so, don't take their help!

Here goes the story:

A group of pupils had completed their studies in a gurukul and were getting ready to go back home. At the time of taking leave of the *muni*, he blessed them as they prostrated before him one by one. The last pupil was Rajan, who happened to be the guru's favourite. But while all the others had finished the curriculum with merit, Rajan had disappointed him.

"I hardly know what to say, Rajan," the *muni* said with a heavy heart. "In some ways, you're above the others, but somehow I've failed to make you a good scholar."

Rajan, who realised his shortcom-

ings, looked downcast. "I'm sorry, guru, but I'm grateful to you for all the guidance you gave me," he said, as he got up to receive the *muni*'s blessings.

"Never mind, my boy," said the guru with a smile. "I shall give you three golden rules for you to follow. First, keep on trying till you achieve your objective. Second, if you ask a sufficient number of questions, you will obtain the answer. Lastly, if you think twice before you act, you won't make mistakes. If you remember my advice, you will do well in life."

Armed with this advice, Rajan set out to make his fortune.

Did he succeed in life? If so, how did he make use of the three golden rules? Write down this second part of the story, and don't forget to give the story a nice title. Send your entries (mark "Creative Contest" on top of the paper) before August 25.

- Editor

Answers to Discovery of India Quiz (July 2000) :

1. a. Mahavira Jina and Gautama Buddha, b. Pali, c. The Tripitaka, d. Ardha-Magadhi, e. The Purvas, the Angas and the Mulasutra.
2. King Bhartrihari of Ujjain and Queen Pingala.



A CHANDAMAMA PRESENTATION

SAMIRIAN SAMIR

Art : Paani

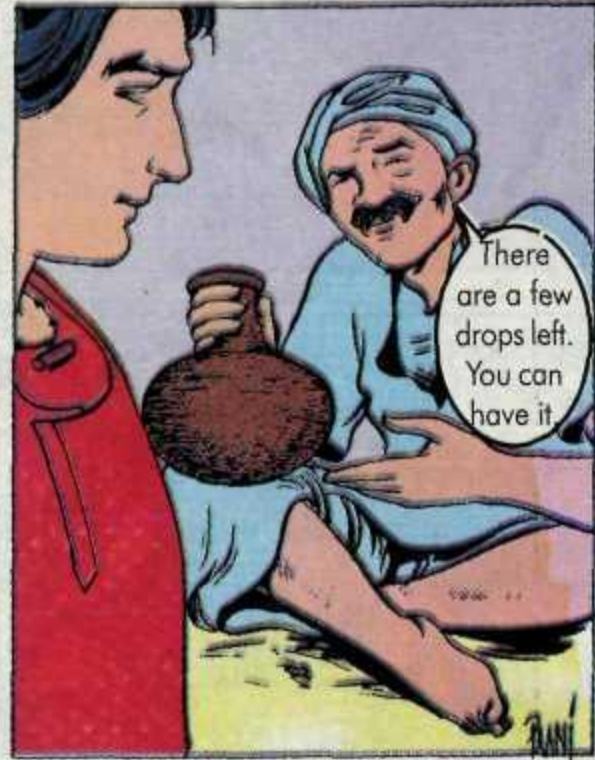
Samir and Sheru reach Gangapur at night. The streets are deserted, doors bolted, and no lights. He hears voices behind one door and knocks. Suddenly, silence!

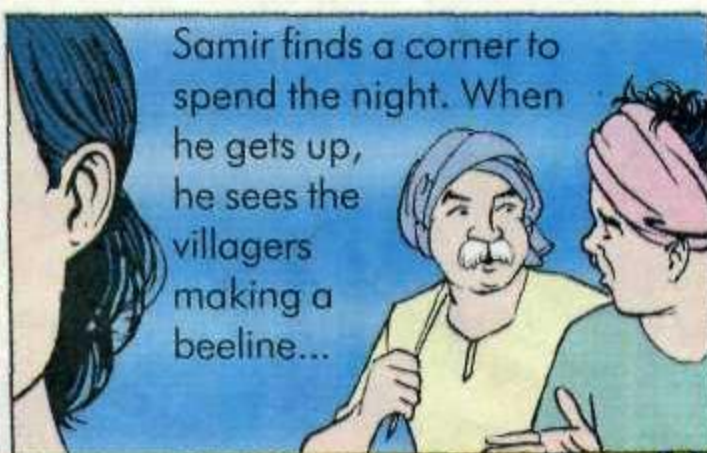


At another house, he peeps through an opening on the door. Two persons are talking in whispers. He knocks...



..... and is surprised. The two lie down and pretend to snore!





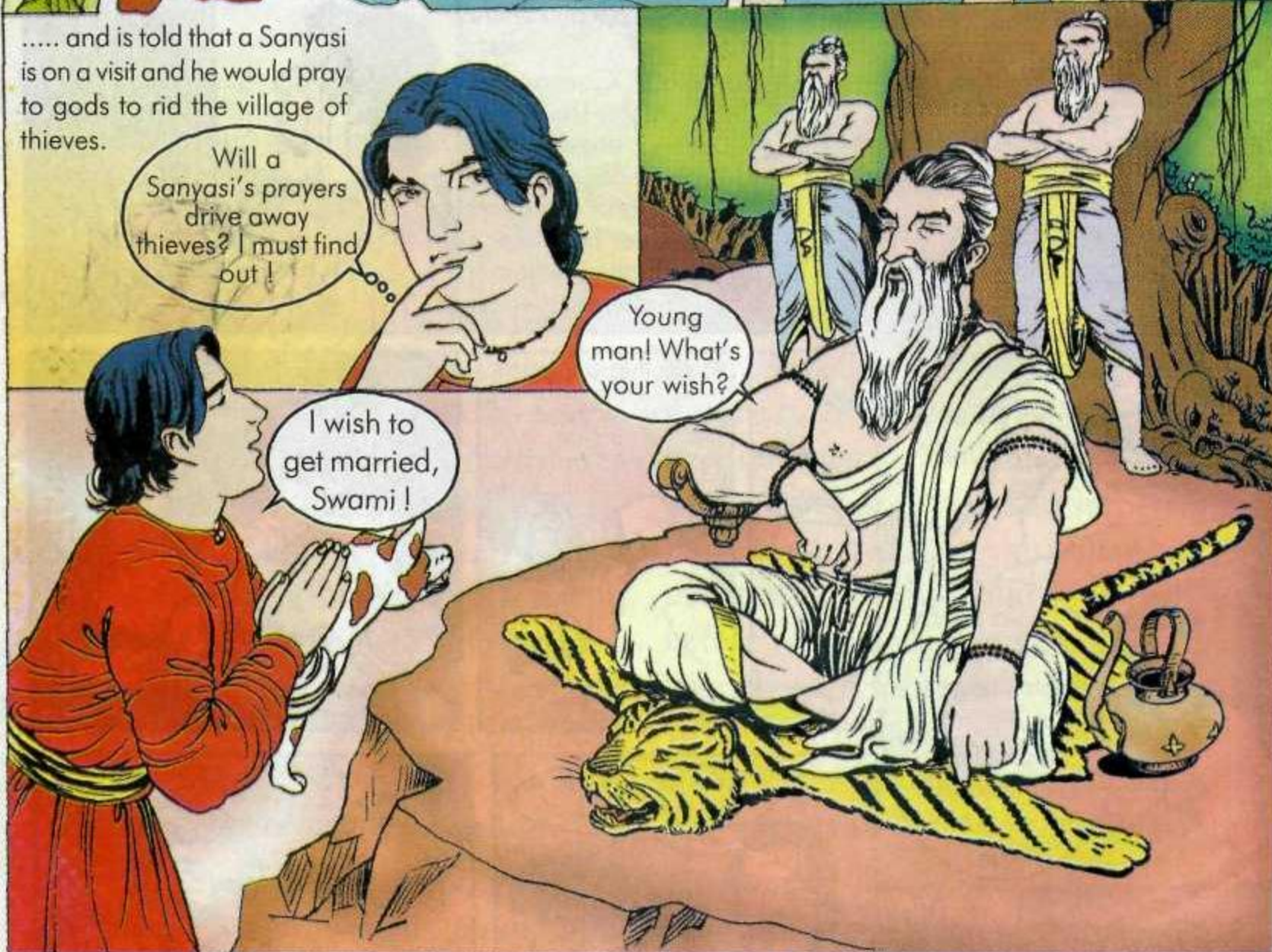
Samir finds a corner to spend the night. When he gets up, he sees the villagers making a beeline...

..... and is told that a Sanyasi is on a visit and he would pray to gods to rid the village of thieves.

Will a Sanyasi's prayers drive away thieves? I must find out!

Young man! What's your wish?

I wish to get married, Swami!



The Sanyasi's disciples whisper to each other.

Your wish will be fulfilled, son!



The Sanyasi closes his eyes for some time and then gets up. He blesses the crowd.

Everybody departs. Samir is left alone.

I've conveyed your request to the gods. Wait till Friday. The thieves would have gone away by then.

But why Friday?

Samir hides behind a rock. In the night, three men are seen carrying bundles which they place at the feet of the Sanyasi.

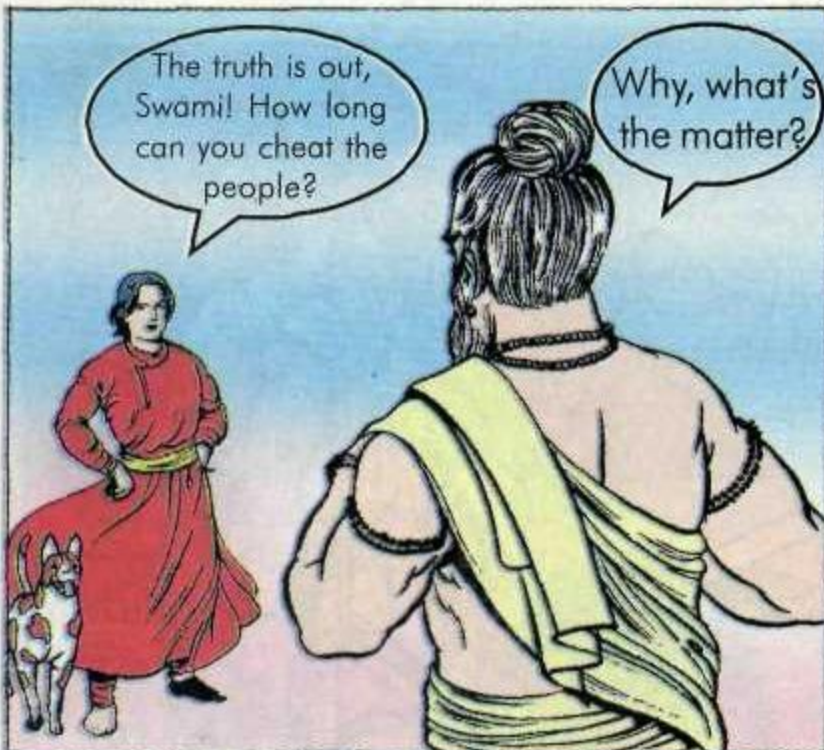
The Sanyasi pulls out small bundles from the bigger ones and places them in a pit just below where he was sitting earlier.

Samir goes back to the village.

What's this I hear? He's not a Sanyasi?

Meanwhile, Samir leads a group of villagers armed with clubs and swords.

Sire! It's not safe here! Let's go!



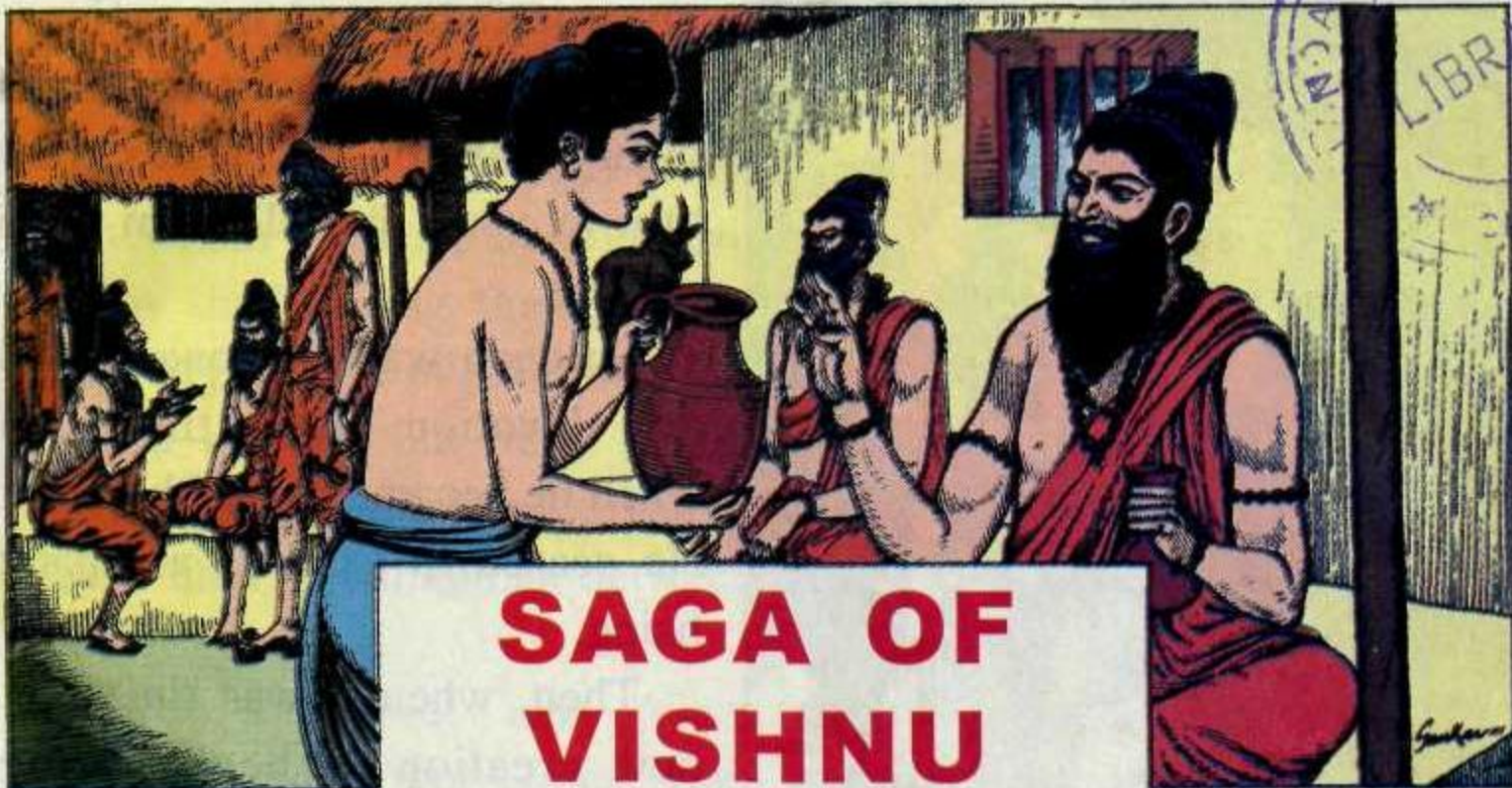
In a swift action, Samir tugs at the Sanyasi's hair and beard which come off in his hands.



The villagers pounce on the Sanyasi and his men.



Next month : Another adventure



3. MYSTERY OF THE POLE STAR

Suta began narrating the story of Narada at the request of the other sages.

Narada bore the same name even in his previous life when he and his mother worked in the household of a wealthy man. His master was a pious man who was never tired of entertaining or serving hermits and travellers. The boy Narada was placed at the beck and call of the guests. As the boy was often required to fetch water for the guests, he came to be called Narada, which literally meant the bringer of water. Everybody liked him.

One day, unfortunately, Narada's poor mother was bitten by a snake

and she died. He had never seen his father, who had either died or had deserted them. Narada was now a complete orphan.

It so happened that Narada's employer, too, died. The family fell into bad days and Narada found himself without any shelter. He roamed in search of food or employment. As he was wearing tattered clothes and had sad looks, he was mistaken to be mad. Some boys pelted stones at him for fun. He was laughed at when people asked him what his father's name was and he failed to answer.

By and by, he was disgusted with the ways of the world. 'It's





better to live in a forest in the company of animals than in any human habitation,' he thought. And he remembered what he heard from holy men who used to be his master's guests—how the forest was the abode of hermits and Yogis. 'Why shouldn't I become a hermit myself? Why shouldn't I devote my life to meditation and prayers? Men have failed me, true, but surely God would not fail me,' he thought further.

Indeed, he entered the forests and sat down and plunged into a deep meditation. "O God, you're

my true father and my saviour. I don't think I'm meant for the ordinary ways of life. That's why I turn to you," he told Him in his prayers.

So deep was his concentration and devotion that a time came when he became one with Vishnu. He ceased to exist as a separate being.

Then, when it was time for a new creation to begin, out of Vishnu's navel emerged a divine lotus, and Brahma emerged from that lotus. Narada was one of the beings to come out of Brahma's consciousness. Hence he was considered to be a son of Brahma and an emanation of Vishnu. He shuttled between the abode of Vishnu and the domain of gods and between the domain of gods and world of men and played a unique role in the affairs of the gods, demons, and men.

Narada realized the great sincerity with which Dhruva wished to meditate on God. He guided him how to go about it and, following his advice, Dhruva walked towards a lonely spot. But his step-brother, Uttamkumar, came



running to him and pleaded with him to return to the palace. "Look here, my brother, if you go away, with whom shall I play and with whom shall I sing the glory of God? My mother might have been unkind to you, but have I ever shown any disrespect towards you?" said Uttamkumar between sobs.

"Don't grieve, my sweet younger brother, but I must concentrate on the Lord and prove that I'm a worthy son of my pious mother. After all, she has accorded her silent approval for the step I'm taking. You should not stand in my way," said Dhruva in an affectionate yet firm tone.

"In that case, my brother, allow me to follow you," said Uttamkumar.

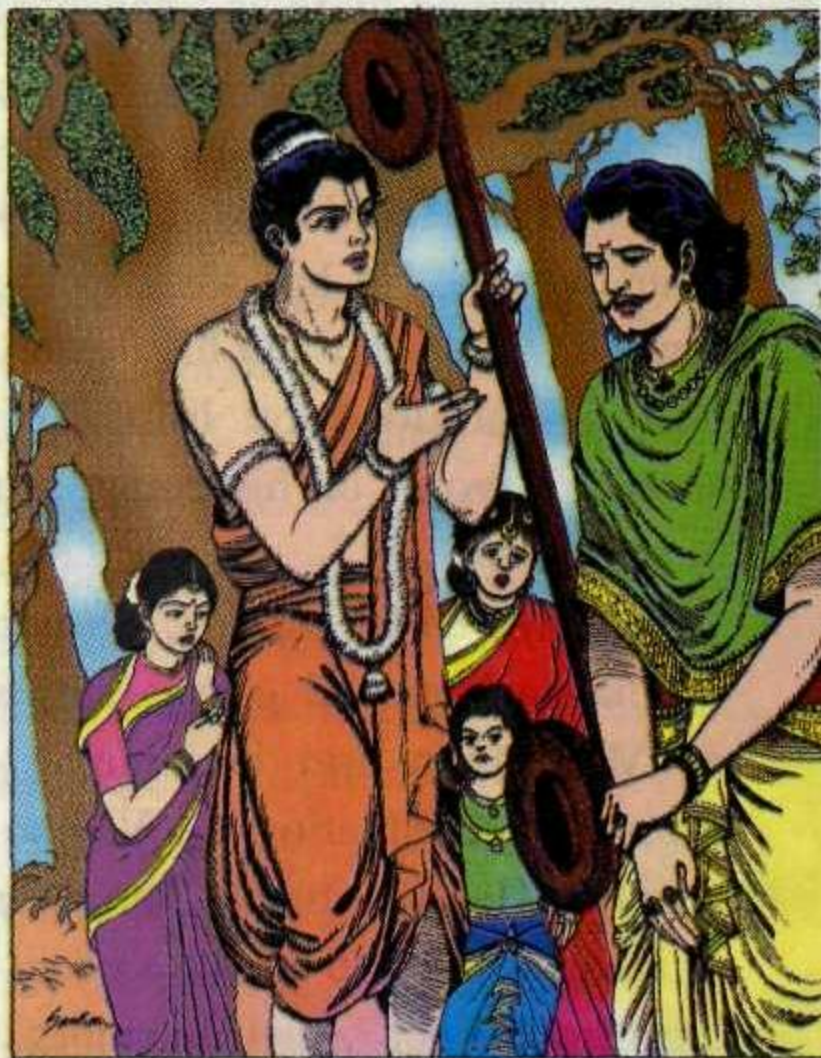
"How can you do that, my dear Uttam? That would make your mother unhappy. I'm your elder brother and I advise you to go back to the palace and lead the life of an ideal prince." They were Dhruva's parting words to his brother.

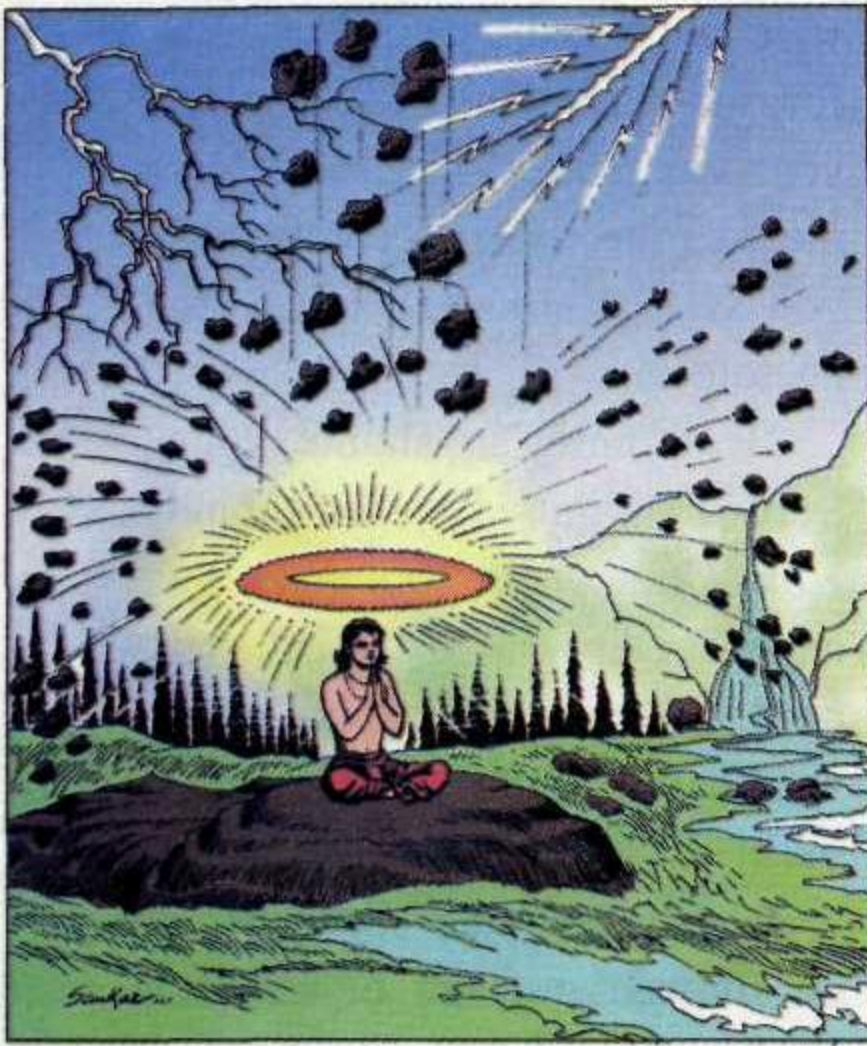
Upset at her son's conduct, Queen Suruchi appeared on the

spot. But her son, Uttamkumar, was furious with her. "Mother, it is your unkindness that has deprived me of my brother's company. So you should not even touch me!" he told her.

Head hung in shame, Queen Suruchi admitted to her blunder. King Uttanapada, too, came there and told Dhruva: "My son, the kingdom is yours. Pardon me my momentary blunder. Please come back."

Dhruva bowed to his father, but he showed no sign of relenting. He began moving away. Just then





Narada arrived there and consoled the king, saying: "Dhruva is destined to achieve what none else has achieved so far. He will glorify your dynasty. He has surrendered himself to Vishnu and his destiny will be moulded by him. You shouldn't worry on his count, but be proud of him."

As directed by Narada, Dhruva reached a beautiful grove known as Madhuvan and became engrossed in meditation on Vishnu, chanting His holy name. The river Yamuna seemed to echo his chanting through her sweet murmurs.

Days passed and the intensity of Dhruva's meditation kept growing. A time came when Indra, the king of the gods, grew panicky, for he feared that Dhruva, by the dint of his penance, might capture his position from him.

Indra created a severe storm to scare Dhruva out of his concentration. He even threw thunderbolts aiming at him. When Dhruva did not budge at all, he sent a whirlwind carrying innumerable pebbles which were intended to harass Dhruva. But, to the surprise of the king of the gods, all such tactics failed to disturb Dhruva. Little did Indra know that the *Sudarshana*, the mighty weapon of Vishnu, circling invisibly over Dhruva's head, protected him from all such attacks.

"Indra," said Narada, "do you consider Dhruva a mere ambitious boy, desiring your lofty position? He's not that. His only aim is to invoke the Grace of Vishnu and nothing else. He hardly cares for any position or power."

Indra realized his error and thereafter nursed nothing but goodwill for Dhruva.



Before long, Vishnu appeared before Dhruva. His joy was beyond description. He rolled on the Lord's lotus feet and said: "O my sole Master, how much I wish to chant your name ceaselessly and through words that are appropriate! But I don't possess the knowledge of the right words. What do I do?"

Lord Vishnu then put his conch-shell on Dhruva's head for a moment. Instantly, the *Vedas* were revealed to the young devotee. He began to chant the hymns fluently.

"What boon do you wish to have, my boy?" asked Vishnu.

"Like the lotus which loves to gaze at the sun all the time, I too wish to see your ever-compassionate face continuously, O Lord!" answered Dhruva.

"That'll be possible. But, for the time being, you should return to your father's palace, resume your princely duties, rule the kingdom with justice, and lead an ideal life. Thereafter, you will be placed in the firmament in a way so that your position never changes and your gaze remains eternally fixed on me," assured Vishnu before dis-

Chandamama



appearing. Dhruva was overwhelmed with gratitude.

This particular descent of Vishnu is known as *Dhruva-Naraya-navatar*.

Dhruva returned to Mahishmati, the city of his father, to the great joy of all. He ascended the throne, when King Uttanapada retired to the forest to lead the last phase of his life as a hermit. Dhruva proved himself an ideal ruler.

One day, while Prince Uttamkumar had gone to the forest for hunting, the Yakshas, a supernatural tribe residing in the for-



est, attacked him and killed him. Unable to bear the loss of her son, Queen Suruchi entered the forest and died in a forest fire.

Dhruva led an expedition against the Yakshas. A fierce battle ensued. Kuvera, the king of the Yakshas,

sent some terrible weapons against Dhruva, but the Grace of Vishnu, which enveloped Dhruva, rendered those weapons totally ineffective. At last Kuvera appealed for truce and paid a huge compensation to Dhruva.

After a long period of glorious rule. Dhruva crowned his eldest son as the king and retired to Badarikashram. There he remained absorbed in trance and his body glowed like gold. At the appropriate time, a chariot reached him to fly him to his ultimate destination. But Dhruva told the charioteer that he would

not like to depart to the heavenly spheres leaving his mother behind. The charioteer pointed his finger at the distant horizon and Dhruva saw his mother, Queen Suniti, ascending to the heavens in another chariot.



Dhruva then happily boarded the chariot meant for him. It took him beyond so many high spheres of the cosmos and left him in the sphere marked for him which came to be known as the Dhruvaloka.

From his own sphere, Dhruva had no difficulty in viewing Vishnu all the time, while the Saptarshi or the constellation of the seven stars circled him.

Dhruva, as a shining star, is remarkable for his constancy and luminosity.

In conclusion, sage Suta said: "There's nothing that cannot be



achieved with faith in the Divine and determination. Dhruva, who took a firm decision even at a tender age of five, is the finest demonstration of this truth.”

The hermits and sages, who listened to Suta with rapt attention, demanded of him more about Vishnu who, they knew, had incarnated several times upon the earth.

Indeed, Vishnu took several forms from time to time. But in the series of his major incarnations, after Fish comes the Tortoise or the Kurmavatar.

Suta narrated the story of this Incarnation of Vishnu, which was like this:

Long long ago, the gods as well as the demons found out the fact that they could achieve immortality only if they consumed the nectar which lay hidden at the bottom

of the ocean of milk. The ocean had to be churned if the nectar were to be brought to the surface.

Needless to say, churning the expansive ocean was no easy matter. Vishnu helped them by lifting Mount Mandar and placing it amidst the ocean. That was to be used as the churning rod. The serpent-king Vasuki agreed to serve as the rope to be tied to the churning rod. When the gods wanted to hold the upper part of the serpent, the demons took it to be a privilege and demanded that they be allotted the upper part. The gods, at first, were unwilling to concede to them their demand. But Vishnu advised them not to make it an issue of controversy. Thus the demons had their way.

The great churning then began.

(To continue)

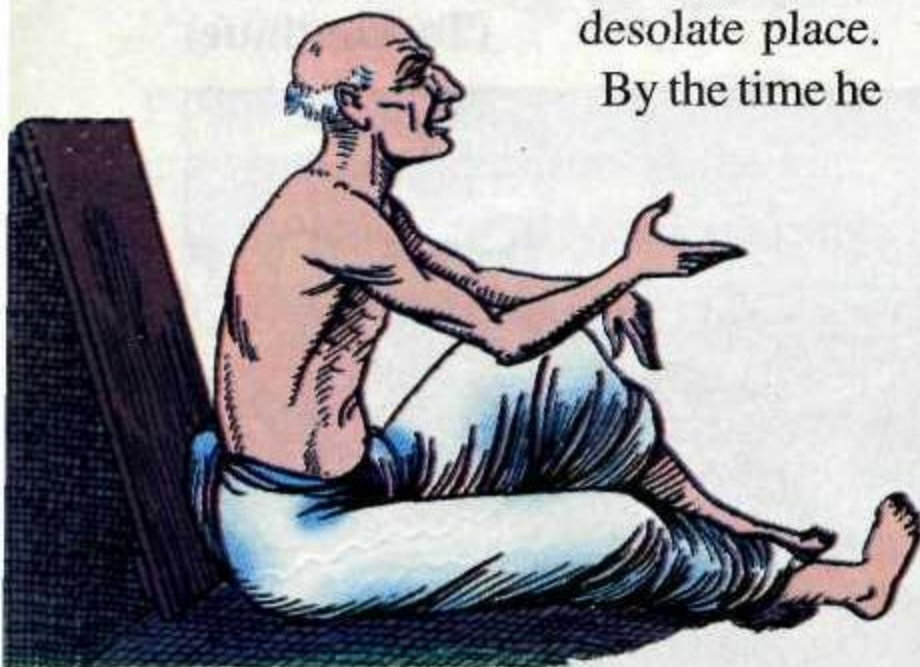


A TALE WITH A TAIL

Madhav was an orphan. When he grew up, he made dolls and toys with clay and took them to the market where he sold them and earned a meagre income. His dolls were pretty looking and he had no difficulty in selling them. He even took them to the neighbouring villages where they attracted many buyers. Sometimes he also went to villages and towns far away in search of custom.

One evening, he was returning from a place quite far away. Unfortunately, he could not sell many dolls, though he remained there well past dusk. On his way back, he had to pass through a desolate place.

By the time he



reached there, he was feeling tired and wanted to rest for the night, as there was no point in hurrying back to his own village.

As he searched for a place to rest, he found a flickering light at a distance. Must be a house, he thought and hastened his pace. It was a small house. The door was open and he entered, holding the basket of dolls and toys with both hands. In the faint glimmer of an oil lamp, he found an old man sitting on the floor. "Sir, I'm coming from far, and it's already late in the night," he said very courteously. "Could I take rest here? I shall go away when the day breaks."

"You're welcome, young man," said the lone man in the room. "You place that basket in one corner, and come and sit here. I shall cook some food and we will share it."



Madhav was surprised over the man's readiness to share his roof as well as food which he was to cook himself. He thought he was very lucky.

The old man, meanwhile, went into the kitchen — Madhav took it to be one — and came back after a few minutes. "It'll take some time for the rice to cook," said the old man, as he went back to the mat on the floor and sat down. "You come and sit by my side, and let me hear you sing a song!" He invited Madhav to sit down.

"Uncle! I'm sorry I don't know how to sing," said Madhav apologetically.

"It doesn't matter, young man, you can at least tell me a story," prompted the old man.

"Uncle, please forgive me, I don't know how to tell a story either!" said Madhav, pitifully.

The old man was really put out. "You can't sing, you can't even tell a story!" he said, angrily. "Then, you can't remain here for another moment. Go away!" he shouted.

Madhav was in a quandary. How else could he please him? No, he had clearly said he could not stay there for the night if he could not sing a song or narrate a tale to his satisfaction, and he was quite adamant that he went away.

Madhav did not wish to create a scene, so he picked up his basket and went out. Where should he go? he wondered. The village where he came

from would be nearer than his own village. So he began walking back to from where he had started in the evening.

It was quite dark by then. Suddenly, he saw a fire at a distance. As he approached, he could just make out that someone was cooking something on the



wayside. The man stopped stirring in the pot when he saw a stranger standing near him. But what was strange and surprising to Madhav was, he called him by his name! "Madhav, would you please take the ladle and keep on stirring till I come back? I shall be back soon," he said, as he handed the ladle to him. He then disappeared.

While he remained wondering how

the man knew his name, Madhav stirred and stirred whatever was in the pot. As the fire was below and it was pitch dark all around, he could not see properly what was in the pot. However, it was full to the brim, though he could only guess that there would be just two persons to eat all that stuff in the pot - if at all the man would be kind enough to invite him to share it.

Meanwhile, there was still no trace of the man and no indication whatever that he was coming back. Madhav was desperate as he was not certain whether he could now stop stirring. He began shouting for the man. There was no response. He shouted aloud, then louder, still there was no answer.

"Hey! Why are you shouting?" Madhav heard someone speak from behind. He turned round, ladle in hand, but could not see anybody.

"Why have you stopped stirring?" The voice was stern.

Was it any ghost or spirit? Madhav

turned round again and threw the ladle to where he thought the voice had come from. "What audacity!" Now it was the ladle that was speaking! It rose from where it had fallen off Madhav's hands, and began beating him black and blue, on the head and back.

Madhav tried to ward off the blows for some time, but when the blows became a veritable shower, he ran away from the place, leaving his basket of dolls on the road. He ran and ran and suddenly he saw a house and a faint light burning. The door was open and he entered and fell down on the floor, exhausted. He was breathless for some time. He wondered where he was. It was the same house from where he had gone away some time ago.

"What happened, young man?" queried the old man. "You look as if you had seen a ghost!"

"Uncle! It's you! Thank god!" Madhav heaved a great sigh of relief. He then narrated all that had happened.

"Well, well, that's a nice story to hear!" said the old man, with a chuckle. "You could have told me this story earlier, and I wouldn't have asked you to go away! All right, go and wash your hands.

The food is ready.

We shall eat together!"



In 1968, two pilots were flying over the Bahamas region in the Atlantic Ocean. As they approached the island of Bimini, they saw an amazing sight! Beneath the surface of the water there were some building-like structures!

At once, the two adventurous men changed their course and circled over their unusual findings, taking photographs. Suddenly, one of the pilots exclaimed, with excitement. He had only recently read a book in which it was predicted that the lost island of Atlantis would rise again. Yes, it would rise to the surface of the western Atlantic Ocean some time in 1968 or 1969! Could it be that Atlantis was appearing as abruptly as it had disappeared more than 1,000 years



THE SUBMERGED CIVILIZATION

ago? Was the prediction coming true now, right below their wingtips? The two awe-struck men wondered as they continued on their way.

In the remote past,

nearly 12,000 years ago, according to the great Greek philosopher Plato, there existed in the middle of the Atlantic



UNSOLVED MYSTERIES

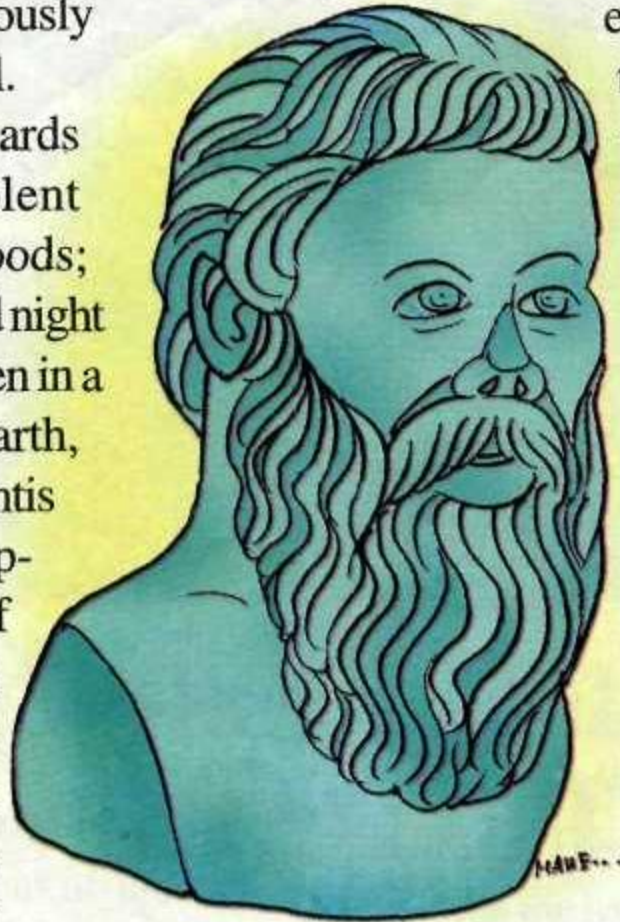
Ocean, a massive and flourishing continent called Atlantis, so named after the giant Atlas, one of the sons of the sea-god Poseidon. It was described as a veritable paradise, the garden of Eden, "where man first rose from a state of barbarism to civilization", and dwelt for ages in peace, happiness, and harmony. The people were

wise, highly skilled, and just. It is said that they had the ability to build airships that shone in the dark as if they were



coated with a luminous paint. They even possessed the mastery of the "life-force" with which they propelled their planes. The city was meticulously planned and beautiful.

But alas, "afterwards there occurred violent earthquakes and floods; and in a single day and night of misfortune all... men in a body sank into the earth, and the island of Atlantis in like manner disappeared in the depths of the sea...." leaving no trace behind. Or could the disappearance of Atlantis be the result of the impact of a colossal meteor with the earth in the Atlantic Ocean?



The famous Greek philosopher, Plato, was the first person to refer to the lost continent of Atlantis.

The story of Atlantis has inspired many writers, film-makers, poets, painters, and even occultists. Madame Helena Blavatsky, founder of the Theosophical Society, wrote *The Secret Doctrine* whose content of wisdom is said to have been first formulated in a forgotten language in the island of Atlantis. But was Atlantis a reality once upon a time? Or is it just a dream of an ideal world full of goodness and free of all ills and evils?

Plato states that it was actually Solon, a sage and statesman, who first brought back to Greece the story of Atlantis from Egypt.

Around 600 B.C., while on a visit to Egypt, Solon was shown by the high priest the famous archives of ancient Egypt, thousands of years old, which recounted the history of Atlantis. Though unfortunately the records are all lost and now Plato's writings are the sole source of this legendary city.

Since time immemorial, scientists, explorers, archaeologists and others have been trying to unravel the mystery of Atlantis by looking for its remains under the ocean. In the 1930s, an American occultist, Edgar Cayce, predicted



It is generally believed that Atlantis broke into two - Antilla (1) and Atlantis (2). The latter vanished completely, while bits of Antilla still remain - the Antilles group of islands in the Caribbean.





An artist's impression of one of the main squares of Atlantis

that indeed, a portion of Atlantis would reappear near the Bahamas in 1968 or 1969. Surprisingly, in 1968 underwater rock formations, remains of buildings in ruins, and a road were discovered off Bimini in the Bahamas. Divers found the road to be 1 km long and made out of large, square stone blocks. Could this be the remnants of the lost city, or are they just natural rock formations?

Pyramids, like those in Egypt, and circles of stones similar to the Stonehenge in Britain have also been sighted in the region of the Atlantic Ocean. A long flight of steps has been discovered off the coast of Puerto Rico. It seems the Russian explorers have

found a group of buildings, covering 4 hectares, off the northern coast of Cuba. Could all these provide some clue to the mystery of the lost continent?

Scientists reason that it takes millions of years for a large chunk of land to sink beneath the waves or to rise again. But according to Plato, Atlantis seems to have disappeared under the water almost overnight! It is impossible, they further argue, for Atlantis to have sunk so quickly or to have already begun to surface again.

Then, did the dazzling ancient civilisation of Atlantis really exist? Or is it just a beautiful dream of our ancient thinkers?



TOWARDS BETTER ENGLISH



Sounds better with 'e'

Bhaskar Chatterjee of Ranchi asks : I find both 'ageing' and 'aging' in use. Are both spellings correct?

The 'g' in 'age' has the sound of 'j', like in agitate, agent. Whereas in words like again, agape and ago, the letter 'g' sounds like 'ga'. In most words where 'g' is preceded by 'a' and followed by 'e' they are pronounced with a 'ja' sound. Therefore, while adding the present continuous conjunction 'ing', it is better if 'e' is retained to get the original pronunciation of 'age', though there are words like agile and agitate in which 'g' is followed by 'i' and which are pronounced with a 'ja' sound. It may be argued that 'aging' can also be pronounced to sound like 'ajing'. 'Aging' thus may not be wrong, but 'ageing' sounds better!

Reader Anita Verma of Hoshiarpur is confused about the use of 'a' and 'an' before nouns starting with a vowel. "In school, we're taught to use 'an', but I find such usage as a university (not an university) and a useful point (not an useful point)" - she writes.

That is because some of the vowels have, in certain usages, the sound of a consonant (yuniversity/yuseful) and, therefore the article 'a' is appropriate. Similarly, an European is wrong; it should be a European; also not an one-rupee coin, but a one-rupee coin. In short, in such cases, it is the pronunciation that guides you, and not the spelling.

Reader Mallikarjuna Rao of Vijayawada says, he often finds book reviews mention of 'poetic justice'. What does it mean?

It is a term coined by Thomas Rymer, an English critic of the 17th century, who found it necessary and appropriate to apportion rewards and punishments at the end of a literary work, like novel, drama, short story, or a poem, depending on the nature of the characters and their action. This only means, the good characters should appear to be prospering ("lived happily ever after"!) while the bad ones are punished. For example, in the *Ramayana*, the demon-king Ravana is made to pay for his misdeeds. So also Duryodhana in the *Mahabharata*. Poetic justice, even today, is being employed to denote that while the good thrives, the evil does not go unpunished or escape retribution.



Let us know



- ✱ **South America is often called Latin America. Why is it so?**

- Parvathi Menon, Secunderabad

By the beginning of the 15th century, people from the southern parts of Europe - mainly Portugal, Spain, France, and Italy - arrived in South America as immigrants. The languages they spoke were akin to Latin and that is how the areas where they settled came to be known as Latin America.

- ✱ **What is a 'banana republic'? Why is it so called?**

- Jagdish Aurora, Jalandar

Some of the economically backward, developing countries generally grow a single crop - mostly fruits like bananas. Their economy depends on export of the lone cash crop. The governments there are usually corrupt and unstable and witness frequent changes. Shall we say, the governments find themselves on slippery (banana peel!) grounds? The description 'banana republic' explains all.

- ✱ **What is patent? How does one know whether a product has been patented or not?**

-Ardeshir Dalal, Pune

A patent, like copyright, establishes ownership. For instance, this magazine has the copyright of all the articles and drawings, also the designing of the pages. They cannot be reproduced in any form by anybody without the permission of the publisher (Company) which has their ownership. Similarly, if you invent or manufacture a device and you are the first person to do so, you can register the device and take a patent. When your ownership is thus established, nobody else can copy the device and claim ownership. In India, we have the Patents Act of 1949. The encyclopaedia of patents is updated periodically. There is also a global encyclopaedia published by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) which has its office in Geneva. 'Basmati' is a special variety of rice raised in India, in the northwestern parts. Recently someone in the USA raised the same crop, called it Basmati, and applied for patent. India had never patented Basmati, but it fought for its rights.



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